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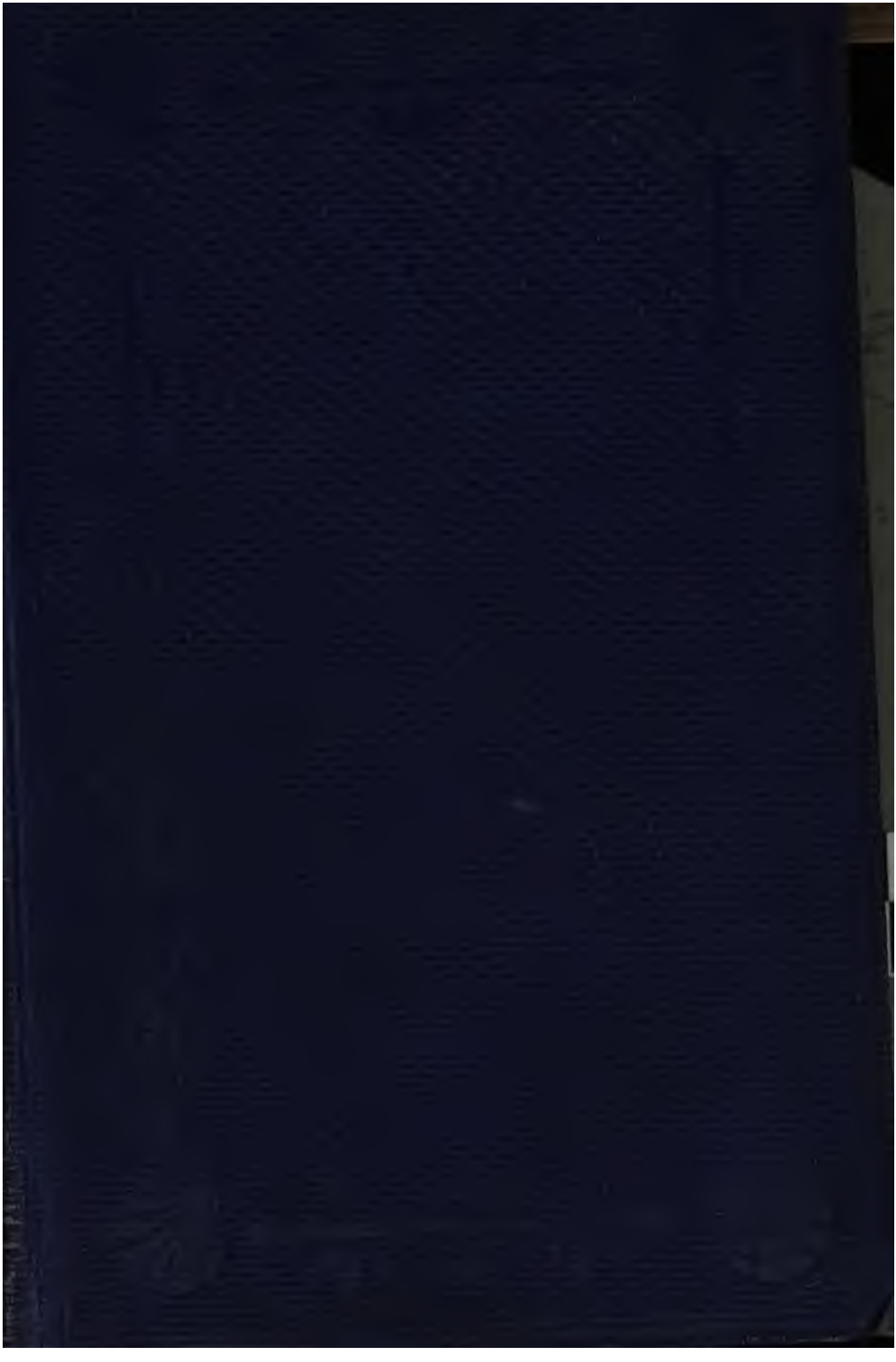

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MISREPRESENTATION

A NOVEL

BY

ANNA H. DRURY

AUTHOR OF 'FRIENDS AND FORTUNE' ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON

JOHN W. PARKER AND SON WEST STRAND

1859

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BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA·

TO

THE REV. JOHN JENNINGS,

CANON OF WESTMINSTER, AND RECTOR OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

AS A MEMORIAL

OF THE GRATEFUL AFFECTION WHICH ALL MUST FEEL

WHO ENJOY THE PRIVILEGE OF HIS FRIENDSHIP

AND OF HIS PASTORAL CARE.

MISREPRESENTATION.

CHAPTER I.

Horatio—or I do forget myself.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE afternoon was as cold as any lover of what are affectionately called, 'real old-fashioned English winters,' could desire: a tingling, uncompromising frost, beloved of skaters and brisk pedestrians, had prevailed for some weeks; beautiful to look at, as far as landscape was concerned, when the short, struggling sunbeams lit up the white branches as with a myriad lamps, and made every spider's web an ornament for royalty; but sharp and searching to every other sense. It was a kind of cold such as we ignorant Londoners can only read or hear of. We know what a long frost means, and what it looks like; the phase in domestic history when pipes burst, and coals rise, and the *gamins* make slides under the very eye of the policeman, and the parks are full of skaters, and the song of the frozen-out gardener is warbled in the public ear. We understand all this, and think, when we read of Russia and the Arctic Regions, that from our own experience we can tell how disagreeable a constant hard season must be. But what is all this to the cold in the country, in such a corner of our island as we are about to visit—

nearer north than south, and east than west—where no friendly opposite row stands between your windows and the cutting blast, which comes unchecked direct upon your homestead, from wild moors far away, like a charge of savage cavalry—flinging a carbine volley of snow and hail against door and window-pane—bursting in wherever a crack or crevice has been left unguarded, and threatening, in its exulting rage, to strip roof and wall of every defence, and scatter you and yours like the last dead leaves whirled from the trees?—a cold that no roasting fire can warm through an inch beyond the bars, that freezes the water in your bed-room, and the panes in your window, and the very hair of your head, to say nothing of the ideas within, which lie ice-bound like the tunes in Baron Munchausen's horn? Cold? yes, this is cold indeed, and if you cannot live through it, so much the worse for you; if you *can* live and get warm in spite of everything, why then it is the finest thing for your health you can conceive, an air-bath, a tonic, *que sais-je?* It had need be something good, so we may give it the credit of whatever it pleases, and hope that somebody is the better for it.

Armed with some such consolatory philosophy, a traveller had been braving his difficulties on the February afternoon in question; pursuing his way tolerably well so long as the iron civilizer connected him with London—rather worse on the top of a cross-country coach, full of crosser-country passengers, to the town of Shareham, which no railway went near; and worst of all, in his attempt to get himself and his port-manteau five miles further through the snow, to the village of Cannymoor. The good people of Shareham had done their best to persuade him from the latter

undertaking, assuring him the snow lay fifteen feet deep, that no horse that ever ate hay could pull him through it, that on Monday last a butcher's lad had been nigh upon smothered, and three old women had not been heard of since Tuesday, and so on; but to no purpose. The traveller had gone through too many worse trials to be baffled by such trifles as these; his money and pertinacity, as usual, carried the day, and a tax-cart from the inn undertook to carry himself. Over the bleak moor that lay between the town and the village, the sturdy horse toiled and strained for three miles and a half without flinching; at that point, the snow had so balled in his feet, that before the driver could jump out to relieve him, he slipped—fell, and could with difficulty be lifted again, both knees cut, and shaking all over. The wise men of Shareham had not been so far wrong, and the traveller for a moment repented.

'How much further is it, my man?' he asked, looking discontentedly along the dreary expanse.

'Better nor a mile,' was the answer, hardly audible behind the thick coat collar and comforter.

'Better nor a mile? so long as it is better I have no objection, but if it be two, I can walk as far. Bring on the horse as best you can; you can put him up in the village, I suppose. There is an inn of some kind, is there not?'

'Oh, ah, there's a place they call an inn, and a stable too, that a dog would turn up his nose at. They feeds their beasts on cabbage-stalks and 'tatoe-parings down there.'

'Oh indeed! and what do their visitors get?'

'Oo, but that'll depend,' said the driver, still busy

with his horse's legs; 'steady, lad!—they don't see so many in the course of the year, I fancy, sir, that they can afford not to make much on 'em.'

'Is it so very retired, then?'

'It's just out o' the way of everything, that's what it is, sir: and it is just as well; for if it was in the way, it would do nobody any good that I know of.'

'You seem to owe it a grudge,' said the traveller, as he walked along by the side of the vehicle.

'Well, sir, and I'll tell you why. Maybe you never saw these parts before, so you won't understand unless I do tell you. When I was a lad here, Cannymoor was just a bit of a village, and a rare place for sport; the Squire as lived at the Manorhouse then, kept nought but sporting company, and a jolly lot they were. Maybe, they were a bit too jolly to last; any way, he spent all his money, and then he sold the land, one bit after another, and one wiseacre came down from London with a great scheme for a railway across country, just as if one hadn't enough of them lines, taking the bread out of people's mouths; and the line was to make Cannymoor a big place, and he must needs cut up the old grounds into building lots, and run up what he called genteel cottages; and then some of the Shareham folks, who didn't know when they were well off, must needs go and live in them. However, it didn't pay, and the party was ruined out and out, and serve him right.'

'But is there no gentleman's family residing at Cannymoor now?'

'Ay, ay—there's them in the Manorhouse, and there's the parson, and there's one or two more decent people enough.'

'But you said the Squire had sold the property.'

'So he did, and a cousin of his bought the house, and lives there, and—but maybe it's there you're going, sir?'

'No, my friend, I am bound for the parsonage.'

'Oh, then you're all right. He is a right good 'un, *he* is: *he'll* make you comfortable; but there are some on 'em there that *is* precious close, for sartin! But I beg your pardon, sir, for talking so much.'

'By no means, my friend—who did you say bought up the estate you spoke of?'

'Why, sir, the best part of it, all the houses and so forth, were picked up, he best knows how, by a sharp old gentleman, living there now, a Mr. Spindler, and I've *heard* say, he did mean to get the Manorhouse too, and be Squire, and landlord, and master, and everything. But Mr. Lyndon, the present one, that is, was too quick for him, and got it first. So one has got all the money, and the other has got the name of the thing: it's not much money Mr. Lyndon has, but no one thinks the worse of him for that; and he's worth a dozen like old Spindler, that he is.'

'Has Mr. Lyndon any family?'

'Oh, there's his lady, poor old body, whose head's a bit touched—and it warn't over and above valuable afore: and two ladies—and there's—woa! hold up!' as his horse slipped again, and was only just saved by a dexterous jerk from being down. 'You'd best step on, sir, begging your pardon, or you'll be froze outright. It's straight ahead, sir—you can't miss it.'

The traveller hesitated a moment, and a shade of impatience passed over his brown features; but after a brief pause, took the advice of his loquacious charioteer, and set off at a rapid pace. When he was some dis-

tance from his companion, he stopped short, drew his breath once or twice heavily and slowly, and pressed his clenched hand upon his heart, as if to still its painful throbs. This only lasted a moment; by a quick effort which only long practice could have made so successful, he flung off the emotion, whatever it was, that had oppressed his spirits, and walked on with a quick and elastic step. The exercise quickened his blood after the severe cold and exposure of the latter part of his journey; and his quick eye took in, almost unconsciously, every feature of the landscape, as if it were collecting materials for a journal; the general impression on his mind being, that somewhere about here the world might be expected to leave off. It was almost cheering to look back at the tax-cart and horse, creeping along the track he had made; and to hear the jingle of the harness, and the encouraging interjections of the driver, every now and then brought near by the gusty wind—and feel that something living was within hail. A question rose to his lips, which, though unspoken, took very much the form of that asked of old—

> Is *this* the region, *this* the place, the clime,
> Which *thou* must change—

and hast changed long ago—for such a lot and such a home as once were thine? But this he silenced as he had before, and only strode on the faster; and as no one can go on for ever, in due time he found himself in a more habitable region: a small farm-house or two—then a few white genteel cottages with flower-gardens—then a village street, with cottages very far from genteel—a church, with a low square tower, pretending to no beauty of any kind, and rather out of repair, and a

homely churchyard full of snow, except on one brown hillock, raised since it fell.

Here the traveller began to look about him. Where the church was the parson might be expected; and yet the venerable parsonage he saw in his mind's eye was certainly not discernible by those of his body. Shouts of boyish voices behind the church showing that life existed somewhere, he followed the sounds in hopes of information, and found himself spectator of a vigorous display of snowballing. The chilly missiles flew so fast, and the boys ran about so confusedly, the traveller could not at first make out the plan of the proceeding. When he did, his amusement changed into wrath. Half-a-dozen sturdy lads were pelting a little fellow, much better dressed than any of them, and much younger—pelting him as hard and fast as their hands could ply; and he, undaunted by numbers, flushed, panting, struggling, was dodging their shot, returning it, displaying courage and energy enough to deserve a medal; and at the same time, with good generalship, gradually working a retreat towards the nearest gate. Whether he would ever have reached it unaided, historians will find difficult to decide. The traveller did not wait to discover, but darting into the midst of the fray, tripped up one assailant, and rolled another over, at the same moment that the gate was thrown open by a rosy girl of thirteen, who called out, 'Walter, Walter! run in!'

Walter moved to the refuge with his face to the foe; a big boy rushed after him, snatched at his collar, and pulled him down. The next minute he was pulled down himself and half buried in the snow, while the traveller had set the little Hector on his legs. Simultaneously with this last *coup de main*, a short, stout old

gentleman in black rushed out of the gate, and flung his oaken stick at the heads of the public generally, with such hearty good will and dexterity, that the field was cleared in an instant of all but the last-mentioned great fellow, thrown down by the traveller. He had now picked himself up, and stood looking sullen and dubious.

'You are a pretty set of rascals, are not you?' roared the stout old gentleman; 'and you, Stephen, that ought to know better, a great strong chap like you to bully a little fellow, and a gentleman's son! If Mr. Lyndon hears of this, your father will hear of it, I can tell you that.'

'Father won't care if he do,' was the answer; 'we arn't Mr. Lyndon's tenants, and we don't care *that* for he!'

'But what did you set on this young gentleman for? Tell me that—and just pick up my stick meanwhile, as I may want it to thrash you with presently.'

The lad's sulky face relaxed a little; he moved to where the stick had fallen, and brought it to the old gentleman, with a touch of his cap.

'It warn't only me, and we didn't go for to hurt him —but—'

'They are a pack of ignorant ninnies!' interrupted Walter, in great wrath; 'they wouldn't believe what I said, and they said impertinent things of me and mamma; and Stephen is a great big bully, with no more sense than a cow, and I told him so, and I tell him so again; and as he doesn't believe I speak the truth, as soon as I am a strong tall man, I'll fight him, and beat him too—that I will!'

Stephen muttered something about that being easier

said than done, which seemed probable, but irritated Walter still more.

'Go home, lad,' said the old gentleman, shaking his stick; 'this does you no credit. You ought to be at work, as I told your father yesterday, instead of wasting your time like this. Off with you—come!' and beginning to twirl his stick as if for another fling, Stephen took to his heels with some precipitation.

The old gentleman laughed, and turning to Walter, now first noticed the stranger, and stood looking at him in perplexed surprise. 'I am sure I know that face, or ought to know it,' said he, as if thinking aloud.

'If you do not, Dr. Home, I cannot blame you,' said the traveller; 'many years have passed since I was your private pupil, and helped you thrash two footpads on the way to Wychersley. You have the same pacific spirit as ever, I see.'

'Now I know that voice, and that sarcastic tone, and all but the bronzed face and mustachios. The Wychersley footpads? There was only one lad with me then, and he was a slight, fresh-looking fellow when I saw him last—you would make two of him.'

'Time and travel, my dear sir, do wonders. You forget how long it is ago. The slight, fresh-looking, and provoking pupil who tried your patience so often, stands before you now, in hopes of trying it a little more, if you will own him.'

'Then it *is* the same; I know the look of your eye now, and right glad I am, and a hundred thousand welcomes, Maurice Gray! Why, where in the world have you dropped from? It is years since I heard of, or saw you. Ay, ay, I recognise your touch now, in the way you tripped up those lads: that was the

Wychersley style all the world over. I am so glad to see you, Maurice. I can't tell you how glad I am.'

If his tongue could not tell, his hands did their best, for they were grasping those of his guest with the energy and vigour of twenty-five.

'In with you, Walter; there is Sophy catching her death of cold waiting for you. Come in, Maurice Gray, come in! the best of my house shall be yours, and a hearty welcome. How good of you to come so far to see an old friend! And where have you been all this while? Come along in, and let us understand all about it; for what with one thing, and what with another, I am beginning not to know what I am about.'

The traveller gladly obeyed: a quick glance round as he entered was sufficient to show him how very small were the parsonage accommodations: it stood in a little garden, without stable or any signs of rural luxury; and directly the threshold was crossed, the vicinity of the kitchen became palpably discernible. There was a good fire, however, in the one parlour, and though small and low, it was tidy, and smelt of nothing worse than old books.

'These are our quarters, Sophy's and mine, Maurice; and such as they are, the longer you share them the better. You don't know my grand-daughter, do you? Shake hands with Mr. Gray, Sophy, and tell him you will do your best to tease him as much as he used to tease me."

'That, I fear, is impossible,' said the traveller, as he returned Sophy's shy, but not ungratified greeting; 'but with my old name, Doctor, I hope I have laid aside some of my old errors. On my uncle Randolph's death, I inherited his name as well as his fortune.'

'Ay, ay! then he did you justice at last? I am right glad to hear it, lad. And you are a man of property, then, are you? It is in good hands, I warrant. And I must call you Randolph, must I? Well, I have no objection; I am glad he righted you before he died. Ay, things look rather different close to the grave to what they do a mile off; men learn more there in minutes than they do in years elsewhere. But what am I thinking of—your luggage, where is it?'

Mr. Randolph explained, upon which out ran his eager host, shouting, 'Colly, Colly!' and at his voice appeared from the neighbouring kitchen, savouring strongly of broth, a long, bony figure, with high cheek-bones, and dark bushy brows, and bare arms, all muscle and sinew, who dropped a curtsey, as she wiped her hands on her apron. 'Colly, woman, be alive now; here is a friend of mine come to stay with me, and his luggage is in a cart, and the cart in the snow, and the horse lame, Colly, and your friend Bob leading it. Send some one to help, quick; and, Colly,' following her as she moved away, 'get the spare room ready' (they boasted a spare room, some eleven feet square), 'and the fire lit, and toss up something hot and good as soon as you can; I'll come and get out a bottle of port; Sophy will help you directly with sheets and all that. An old friend and pupil, Colly; so we must make him welcome; bustle about, that's a good little woman.'

The good little woman, whose length appeared painfully disproportioned to the size of the house, looked at Mr. Randolph for a minute or so from head to foot, smoothed her apron deliberately, nodded her head with a smile, and with a half-audible 'We'll see,' vanished

as promptly as she had come. The old clergyman rubbed his hands.

'There! Colly has undertaken it all; now you are all right. There is not such another little woman as Colly, sir, take her for all in all, not in all Queen Victoria's dominions. There is nothing she cannot do, or will not do, for those she loves. You would not suppose it, perhaps, but Colly has the tenderest feelings, the softest heart. She got the name of Colly from a wild young pupil of mine, who said she made such a capital shepherd's dog, and so she does. Ah! those pupils, what a life I have had with them! but not one has had the kindness to do as you have done, Maurice, and come after so many years to see the old man before he died. I thank thee, lad, I do, from the bottom of my heart!'

Randolph mechanically returned the pressure of his old friend's cordial hand, but it must be confessed he had paid little attention to his words. Ever since their entrance, he had been unable to take his eyes off little Walter, as he stood warming his numbed fingers at the fire, and arguing in a low tone with Sophy, who, while she secretly admired him as a prodigy of cleverness, felt it her duty, as his senior, to dispute all the propositions he somewhat dogmatically laid down for her belief. The traveller looked, and looked again; for those eyes, full, dark, and beaming, the peculiar shape of the lid, and deep fringe of the lash, were as familiar to his memory as the home of his childhood; and as he looked, his heart grew sick within him.

'Fool that I am!' he thought, 'and worse than fool! In everything I meet I imagine I see what I crave, and every black-eyed urchin must needs remind

me—as if there were no dark eyes belonging to any one else in the world, or as if it would do me any earthly good to see them!'

He turned away with an effort, to heed, as he should have done sooner, his old friend's hospitable arrangements and suggestions.

'Doctor, once for all, if I am to put you or your family to the slightest inconvenience, out of your house I tramp without more ado. I am an old traveller—have been all over the world; you cannot exhaust my resources. I can find bed and board where another would go sleepless and supperless; a hammock, a sheepskin, or a cupboard, is bedroom enough for me, and I defy you to name the dish I have not found palatable.'

Walter's dark eyes turned eagerly on the traveller.

'Oh! have you really been all over the world? Will you tell me all about it? I do so love to hear about travels, and so does mamma, and she was only wishing the other day I could see somebody who could tell me all about the Geysers that Mackenzie saw in *Winter Evenings*. *Did* you ever see a Geyser?'

'Yes.'

'Oh! did you *really*, now! And will you tell mamma and me all about it?'

'Who is your mamma?' asked Randolph, with a smile, though his lip trembled.

'Who is *my* mamma? Why, Lady Adelaide Lyndon, to be sure!' said Walter, in a tone that plainly asked, 'Where have you lived not to know that?'

Rather to his discomfiture, the stranger laid one hand on his shoulder, and with the other put back the

tangled hair from his forehead, to inspect his features more closely. He would fain have slipped away, but besides the steady grasp of the strong hand, something in the traveller's sunburnt face attracted him; and he stood patiently, blushing even above the glow of the frost and the fire.

'Have *you* ever travelled, my pretty boy?' asked Mr. Randolph.

'Yes, sir, but please don't call me a pretty boy, as if I was a baby.'

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Walter Lyndon. Where have you travelled, may I ask?'

'Why, in India, of course; and I came over with mamma and Brown John, all round the Cape.'

'And who is Brown John?'

'Oh! don't you know? He was poor papa's native servant—so clever, and so funny. He knew *such* odd tricks, and frightened silly people out of their wits, you know. *I* was never frightened, but the people here were. He had a little cottage here all to himself; and we were so fond of Brown John, were we not, Sophy?'

'Very,' Sophy assented: but owned also, that he frightened *her* at first with his strange tricks, and Colly had told her several of the people thought him a magician.

'Poor old John!' said Dr. Home; 'he was a fine Oriental specimen, Maurice, and died, I trust, a sincere Christian; but his dark skin and sleight-of-hand were too much for some of our rustics, and now the poor faithful fellow is dead, they will not pass his grave by night if they can help it. I do believe they looked upon him as a Doctor Faustus at least, if not worse. I convinced some of the more sensible ones of their

folly, but I am ashamed to own, all my wisdom has failed with others. The march of education is but a one-legged affair down here, Maurice. I assure you they didn't half like the poor native being such a favourite with his mistress, and this youngster being allowed to play with him. I had the greatest respect for Brown John; he showed great courage and fidelity to his master and mistress in India, and I was very fond of making him talk, when he would, of his perils and escapes. Ah! Walter, how he used to speak of your mamma!'

'I should think so,' said the boy; 'and that is why *some* people could not bear him. Nothing makes *somebody* more cross than to be asked about the brave way mamma behaved in India, and all that: and don't I take care to bring it in somehow when anybody is by!'

'You are a very saucy lad,' said Dr. Home, 'and it is high time you went to school. Meanwhile, you must run home, or your mamma will be uneasy; and she has had quite enough anxiety in her life already, without giving her any more.'

'Oh, do let Colly see him safe home!' cried Sophy, to Walter's intense indignation. He require anybody to take care of him, indeed! what next? He thought Sophy had more sense, but women were all alike, except his mamma.

'Let him go,' said the old rector; 'I'll be bound no one touches him any more. But hark ye, my fine fellow, don't go playing with those lads again; they are not fit comrades for you.'

'I don't want to play with them, not I,' said Walter; 'I was walking with Bob Grayling, and I asked him if

he knew anything about ice and snow—how they come, you know, and all that; and he did'nt,' continued the young philosopher, buttoning his coat with an air of pitying superiority.

'And as you *did*, sir, I suppose you explained it to him?'

'Well, I began; but people are so stupid, there is no doing anything with them, and he declared that I did not know what I was talking about, and it was just like a pastrycook to know how to make ice—so like him! He is always thinking of eating and stuffing: and *I* know what happened to him on Christmas-day, when he had three—'

'There, never mind Bob Grayling's little weaknesses; tell us what that had to do with your snow-balling.'

'Why, Doctor Home, just as I was repeating to him, as plainly as I could, all about it—and how mamma herself had helped to make ice with an air-pump—don't you remember her telling us, Sophy, how she burnt her dress with the acid?—just as I was telling him this, there came a great roar of laughter behind us, and there were those fellows who had been listening all the while. They were very impudent, and asked if they might come and see me pumping snow some day, making game of me, you know: and I just told them they were a lot of ninnies for their pains, and then they got angry, and Bob ran away.'

'Well, and what did you do?'

'Why, I reasoned with them,' said Walter, gravely, 'and told them mamma knew all about it, and she had seen it herself, and anybody could make ice who had the proper apparatus; and Joe Steadiman said it was very wicked to say so, because only God could make it:

and he supposed I had learned that from Sergeant Wade, the unbeliever, that my lady was so fond of visiting. I felt very angry at this, and I said it was much more wicked to slander their neighbours, and mamma said so. Then they began to hoot at me, all but Joe, who walked off; and Stephen said, as I was so clever at making ice and snow, I should have plenty; he knew what Betty Fell told his mother, and he supposed it was one of Brown John's conjuring tricks, and they all began to abuse Brown John, and Sergeant Wade, and mamma and me, and then they took to the snow-balling, and I ran, and they after me.'

'I see,' said Dr. Home, who had listened very attentively to this eloquent description; 'but what was that about Betty Fell? Did I not hear you had played her some trick, and made her leave her situation?'

'Oh, it was really nothing, Dr Home! only she was always prying about, pretending to be putting to rights, and I know she meddled with mamma's things, though she was told not; and I had read about phosphorus in a story-book at home, and mamma had given me a bit, so I wrote up on a dark wall, "Betty peeps," and when she saw it, she ran away screeching, and gave warning directly.'

'I say,' said the old gentleman, turning to Randolph, who looked much amused, 'what are we to do with this young Friar Bacon? First he scares a harmless housemaid out of her five wits, and then he harangues a village mob on natural philosophy with the thermometer at 15° below freezing. Phosphorus indeed! and his mamma allowing it! Things are coming to a pretty pass. Wisely said the poet, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing!" I guessed there was something of

the kind in Betty's sudden departure, by what your aunt said; and Betty is cousin to Stephen's mother, one of the most ignorant bodies in the parish, and has told her, no doubt, that Brown John's ghost haunts the dark passages of the Manorhouse, like the lady in the tapestried chamber. Well, away with you, Walter; it is with you as that fellow says that your mother is so fond of,

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers.

When you know more, you will make better use of it. My compliments to your grandfather, and as my friend Mr. Randolph is staying with me, he must excuse me this evening. Be off with you, and get wiser as fast as you can.'

CHAPTER II.

A weary lot is thine, fair maid,
A weary lot is thine!
To pull the thorn thy brow to braid,
And press the rue for wine.
WALTER SCOTT.

WALTER sped manfully home, brimful of his adventures, and proud of his own intrepidity in braving the unseen enemies that might be lurking behind every steep snowbank, to overwhelm him with the tempting missiles. The rector's opinion proved correct; no one molested him on the way, and he was safe at home in ten minutes.

A gloomy home it was, it must be confessed, as far as outward appearances went. A red-brick house, with deep embrasured windows, and low ceilings; dark old-fashioned furniture, sombre passages, and an indescribable heaviness in the atmosphere, redolent of ancient closets, stuff curtains, dried leaves, skins preserved in patchouli—walls whose paper had been unrenewed for nearly a century—Turkey carpeting whose date and colour were equally mystical—and above all, the constant presence of ladies who preferred scents to fresh air. One of these met Walter as he opened the hall door.

'My dear boy, how very wrong it is to be out so late! What have you been doing? Now if you catch cold being out in the snow, don't come complaining and

fussing to me—I am not responsible, and so I shall tell your mamma.'

'You have often told her so, already, aunt Penny, and she does not care, nor do I.'

'You are extremely rude and naughty, Walter! I shall tell your grandpapa how you behave.'

'Then I shall tell him what you said to Miss Sweetman and Miss Chatterley yesterday, when you thought I was out of the room.'

Miss Penelope Lyndon coloured furiously; she shook her clenched hand at the little rebel.

'I will teach you to listen and spy, sir! Do you call that gentlemanly and right? Is that what your mamma approves, I should like to know? It may be considered correct in *her* family, but it certainly is not in ours!'

Her voice was raised so high, it caught the ear of one but too familiar with the sound, and a handsome lady in black the next minute entered the hall. Walter sprang forwards, and threw his arms round her waist; she kissed his forehead, asking what had been passing between him and his aunt, that she seemed so angry?'

'Walter is very naughty, Adelaide, and very impertinent; he really must and shall be punished,' said Miss Lyndon, still in great wrath.

'What do you think I did, mamma?' retorted the unabashed Walter; 'I heard aunt Pen telling Miss Sweetman and Miss Chatterley, when she thought I was gone, that you——'

His aunt was too quick for him; her hand came smartly over his face and mouth, making them tingle again.

'You *dare,* sir, repeat what you overheard in that

mean way! Your mamma may think it all right—I dare say she does—but in *our* family such behaviour would be called shameful!'

He looked up eagerly in his mother's beautiful face; it was grave, almost stern.

'Your aunt is perfectly right, Walter; nothing is more contemptible than gossip and tale-bearing. I am ashamed of you.'

The boy's face grew scarlet; his eyes filled; and flinging down his cap and coat, he rushed upstairs.

Then the ladies looked at each other.

'I am very glad you at last see the necessity of correcting him, spoiled as he has been,' said Miss Penny.

'I am very sorry you should have troubled yourself to undertake the correction,' said Lady Adelaide. 'In future be so good as to leave him to me.'

'A pretty obedient boy *you* will make of him!'

'He has always obeyed *me*—he always will.'

'Oh! you think so, do you? Wait till you thwart his inclinations, and see if he does not turn as restive to you as he does to everybody else; unless, indeed, he inherits obedience, like all the other virtues, by right of descent.'

The handsome face of Lady Adelaide grew dark with resentment and scorn. She compressed her proud lips till they had no colour left, but without answering stooped to pick up Walter's cap and coat, which he had left, as usual, in the middle of the hall.

'Ah,' went on Miss Lyndon, still too wrathful to refrain, 'I wonder you let that child racket about wherever he pleases. You know you are not popular among the people, and I should never be surprised to hear that some of them had teased him, just to annoy you.'

'It is an easy and safe method of annoyance, I admit,' said Lady Adelaide, drily; 'but one I am growing accustomed to.'

'Oh! you mean me—you are affronted because I made him hold his tongue just now. Really, he might have told you all that was said, for what I care; it was his impertinence I could not stand. Lavinia Sweetman was saying how much they wished you would be more sociable, and civil, and neighbourly, and Susan Chatterley wondered what you thought good enough for you, or something of that sort—you know her way of rattling on—and they both wished it could be explained to those who have remarked upon it, that you were only shy, and not so proud and overbearing as they supposed; and I believe I tried to turn it off as a joke. I forget what I said. It was only what I had heard fifty times, and told you of when I did hear it. You may depend on my always doing so.'

'Thank you,' said Lady Adelaide.

'It was very natural the poor souls should be affronted, you must feel that. So attentive and proper as they always are to us, and so full of respect for our family, it must mortify and displease them to be met always with a proud look, and a short answer, and a curtsey that begs them to keep their distance. I am sure that when they complain to me that her ladyship is so dreadfully high and mighty there is no speaking to her, I can only say I am sorry for it. I am convinced, so strong is the general feeling, that if it were not for respect for my father and regard for me, you would soon find nobody would speak to you.'

'That is all I ask of them,' said Lady Adelaide, wearily.

'Yes, that is very pretty talking, but you would not like it when it came to the point. Why, even now you are so disliked, and such stories are spread about you, that the work-people hate your very name, Mrs. Grayling says——'

'Mrs. Grayling is very good to come and bring such pleasant information. Unfortunately it cannot be true.'

'Why not, pray?'

'I have never had anything to do with the people, and I question whether they ever think of me at all.'

'That is just what they say. You never do anything for them, you never visit anybody, except, from sheer perverseness, that cross-grained old sergeant, whom everybody else avoids, and who bears the worst character in the parish.'

'Am I accountable to Mrs. Grayling and Miss Chatterley for the acquaintances I make?'

'No; nonsense—of course not; but I only say people cannot help noticing these things, and they will make their remarks. You take no part in any of our charitable arrangements; the people might die before you would condescend to look after them—and, of course, they don't like you. I should be sorry, I know, to have such things said of me as are said of you.'

'And to whom am I indebted for this amiable character? To Mrs. Grayling?'

'Oh, I have heard it from different quarters, and I always turn it off as well as I can; but people will judge for themselves, and when they see how you are at home, no wonder they are ready to believe anything. There is my father calling; don't let what I have said vex you, my dear. People *will* talk, you know.'

'They *will*,' said Lady Adelaide. 'Sooner than be

silent, they will repeat, carry, or invent foolish remarks, to make other people uncomfortable, if they can; no one would think of being vexed by such nonsense.'

Miss Lyndon gave her a bitter look, coughed significantly, and followed her to the drawing-room, where a peremptory voice had been shouting to them for the last five minutes.

Mr. Lyndon was a thin, withered-looking, wiry man, nearly bald, with a restless, impatient eye, and imperious manner; the autocrat of his house, and acknowledged dictator of his neighbourhood; whose chief anxiety since he attained the dignity of 'the Squire,' had been to keep everybody in mind of the fact. In proportion to his want of real power, was the vigorous use he made of what he had; and power is one of those accommodating things of which we can truly say, that a little will go a great way. To call twice for one of his family was a great breach of discipline, and he showed his sense thereof at once in his address.

'Why, Adelaide, my dear, what *is* all this? Walter tells me he has been mobbed, insulted, knocked down, and I don't know what besides, by a parcel of ragamuffins, and was rescued by a strange visitor of Dr. Home's; and the doctor, on account of his visitor, cannot be here this evening. Hang the visitor—and the ragamuffins too! You must really look after the child a little more, my dear; you must indeed. I am not going to have my heir exposed to this sort of thing, I assure you! If you are not competent—your health, and so forth—I must see about a resident tutor; I must indeed.'

'You never told me this, Walter,' said his mother; 'are you hurt?'

'No, mamma, not a bit.'

'No, he is not hurt, I soon ascertained that; but that has nothing to do with it. He might have been killed, for all you knew. I am really surprised, my dear Adelaide, that you are not more careful of him.'

Lady Adelaide's only reply was to draw her boy down on a seat by her side, and press his curly head to her bosom; but Walter keenly resented the idea of not being able to take care of himself. He protested that grandpapa was as bad as Sophy Home, who wanted Colly to walk back with him; the boys were only a set of donkeys (to use no stronger term) who wouldn't believe anybody who knew more than themselves; he only wished he was big enough to give them a good licking for the impertinent things they said of his mamma. At this point he was interrupted by the triumphant exclamation of Miss Penelope. 'There! I thought as much—and I said so!'

'Of your mamma, Walter? what do you mean?' cried Mr. Lyndon.

'Why, grandpapa, it was only stuff, after all; but when I told them mamma knew how ice could be made in a pump—I mean an air-pump, of course—they abused me and her too, and said it was wicked, and a conjuring trick, and I don't know what. But Dr. Home thinks it was my fault for frightening Betty,' added Walter, bravely.

'Of course,' said Miss Penny, 'I could have told you that at the time; it is wrong, and dangerous, and foolish to go on as you do, and as your mamma allows you to do, meddling with those horrid chemical things, or whatever you call them, and frightening everybody

out of their senses. And as to the things the boys said, it is only what I knew it would come to.'

'What do you mean by that?' cried Mr. Lyndon, angrily; 'I cannot conceive what you are talking about, Penny? What on earth has my grandson's trying experiments to do with the young rascals out of doors? He is not to ask their permission, I hope?'

'Oh dear, no! you mistake me, papa, entirely. I only mean this has evidently been done to spite dear Adelaide; and as I was telling her just now, her shyness and reserve have been misunderstood by some of our neighbours, and she has made herself unpopular with the common people; there is no concealing the fact, and I am very sorry for it.'

'Why, Adelaide,' said Mr. Lyndon, turning hastily to her, 'what do you say to this?'

'I have nothing to say, sir; it appears to me beneath your notice, or mine.'

'But I don't understand—whom have you been quarrelling with—why are you unpopular? *you*, the mother of my heir, who ought to be looked up to by everybody? I say, *why* is it, if it be so?'

'Do you hold me responsible, sir, for every caprice your neighbours may take into their heads?'

'It is not caprice,' said Miss Penny, sharply; 'they have disliked you from the first, and I must say with reason.'

'You hear, sir,' said Lady Adelaide. 'Penelope understands the whole story, and can explain it, if I cannot.'

'I don't want any explanations: I don't want to hear the impertinent remarks people choose to make to Penelope, and which I am surprised she listens to.

What I say, is this—and you know when I say a thing I mean it—I shall put a stop to any insolence among the cottagers at once; and as to the neighbours, who have always hitherto behaved to us with respect, I expect that you, Penny, take care to explain properly any misunderstandings that have come about; and that you, Adelaide, exert yourself a *little* more to be agreeable, as you know you can be when you please, and let me hear no more nonsense about your not being popular. I am really astonished at the boldness of the people—quite astonished.'

The announcement of the five-o'clock dinner (such old-world fashions had Cannymoor!) interrupted this discussion; and Mr. Lyndon flattered himself he had settled it all in a masterly manner. While the family, therefore, are proceeding, almost in silence, with this necessary duty, we may just obtain an insight into the number of members composing it, and the relation wherein they stood to one another.

As Bob the driver had informed Mr. Randolph, Mrs. Lyndon, who was several years her husband's senior, had fallen into a state of helpless childishness;—quiet, gentle, and easily amused, the concerns of life passed her unheeded, and her sway had long since devolved on her energetic eldest daughter, Penelope. Miss Lucy Lyndon, the second, having spent her life and intellects in a fruitless struggle against her sister's yoke, whereby the whole of her ideas had become entangled beyond remedy, had at length been reduced to a repining subjection; and yielded, though under protest, the tribute to Penelope's despotism which that vigorous authority claimed from all within its range.

As second in command to her father, no one was

exempt—kindred, servants, friends and neighbours, all alike bowed before Miss Lyndon's fiat, till the arrival of her widowed sister-in-law, to be a resident in their house, and dispute her dominion over all she surveyed.

The marriage of Walter Lyndon with the Earl Delaunay's sister had had its day of glory in Cannymoor; the whole place feeling that a ray of aristocratic dignity had thereby been shed upon it: but as the bridegroom's regiment was on the point of departure for India, the curiosity of those who were longing for a sight of the bride, was fain to be satisfied with such descriptions as Miss Lyndon transferred to them from her brother's letters. So long as she was yet unknown, 'my sister-in-law, Lady Adelaide,' was a considerable favourite, and was brought forward with wonderful effect, whenever it was necessary to make an impression on the audience; so that it was quite the fashion in Cannymoor to consider them the dearest and most united friends in the world. But when, some months after poor Walter's death, his widow and child came to make his home their own, it was soon but too palpable that fashion, as she often is, was mistaken.

The society of Cannymoor (with all respect be it spoken) was not of the highest order in point of birth, nor of the profoundest depth in point of intellect: but of this they were happily unconscious, and naturally concluded it must be as great an event to the fair stranger to be received among them, as it was to themselves to sit in the same room with the daughter of a dead earl, and the sister of a living one. Her rank, her beauty, and the interest excited by her sorrows, raised the enthusiasm of the whole neighbourhood; and Miss Penelope, who had reigned so long supreme, found

herself on the point of sinking into comparative insignificance. The consequence was, that a keen jealousy of her sister-in-law speedily took place of the sympathy and goodwill she had felt for her at first: and most energetically did she set to work to re-establish her tottering empire, and teach this formidable rival her proper place. The former was easier than the latter; the manner in which Lady Adelaide, when her period of seclusion was over, received the flattering homage of her new acquaintances—a manner that in its quiet grace left nobody word of complaint to make, and yet as plainly as pride could speak, told them she was not of them, and never could be—effectually damped the glow of her first popularity.

Then, as it gradually revealed itself to their minds, that she had no taste for any of their favourite topics of conversation; that she preferred the dry dull books in Dr. Home's study to the choicest volumes in the Reading Club; that she declined tea-parties, took long difficult walks all over the country, instead of dropping in for a little chat first with one neighbour, then with another—the amount of bodily exercise favoured in Cannymoor; that she taught her boy all his lessons, including Latin (some even whispered Greek, but that was too dreadful), encouraged him in all sorts of horrid dangerous tricks, of which he, as we have seen, took care to boast pretty freely—the predominant feeling towards 'my lady' became one of undefined dread and dislike: and all hearts turned back to Miss Penelope with a warmth of devotion, heightened by a little remorse.

Miss Penelope was in no hurry to remove this impression: she had a happy way of saying disagreeable

things, and she dispensed a few to her good neighbours with a graciousness, that showed them they were on the same friendly terms as ever. That her brother's widow held them all in but slight estimation, she attempted not to conceal, rather the reverse; any lingering loyalty towards the earl's daughter that might have survived her indifference, was in a fair way of being eradicated by the stories of her pride and other evil qualities, that became Miss Lyndon's favourite confidence with her friends. And this state of things having gone on now for the best part of three years, might be considered as established beyond the risk of any re-action.

In dealing with her sister-in-law in person, Miss Lyndon had a harder task. Possibly she might have set about it in a better way—possibly it had been wiser in Lady Adelaide to have met it differently; but where one was determined to subdue, and the other had never been subdued in her life, it was Greek meeting Greek, and the tug of war became a heavy strain on the bands of relationship. Would Adelaide but have submitted herself, have given up her tastes, her friendships, and her affairs to Penelope's guidance, Penelope would have forgiven her everything—forgiven her for being younger, handsomer, better born and bred, and educated than herself; forgiven her what was almost worse, for being what she undeniably was, poor—and might, from the very fact of being able to patronize and direct her, have become her zealous, sympathizing friend. But Adelaide never would be patronized, could scarcely be sympathized with; for to obtain sympathy at Cannymoor it was necessary to talk of your troubles, and Coriolanus himself was not more averse to winning voices by a display of wounds. Whatever hers were—a widow of eight-

and-twenty—and no one could look upon her pale, resolute face without seeing it had passed through scenes from which few come off unscathed—she kept her mantle wrapped over them, and seemed determined not to let them wear her down. By study, by active exercise, by constant employment, she fought against melancholy, and endeavoured to supply the resources which were cut off elsewhere. As for the people of Cannymoor, of whom Penelope had given her a distaste before she saw them, by her peremptory advice to receive them cordially, their manners and habits offended her taste, and she saw no reason for cultivating their good opinion. She was told over and over again she was unpopular, and treated the intelligence with indifference, because it was Penelope who had said it; but it had the effect of increasing her distant reserve, and deepening her dislike to the place she was doomed to live in. Then, as all the charitable doings of the place were shared among the ladies, and no one could do anything that was not known to everybody, and discussed at committees and meetings, and friendly tea-drinkings, the report soon became spread that my lady was so proud and grand she would not visit the poor, or the schools, or join in the working society, or care for her distressed neighbours at all. She would go and sit with her Indian servant in his illness, to be sure—that horrid brown fellow with the black eyebrows and white turban—and she visited *one* person besides, certainly, just out of the spirit of perverseness, because nobody else did!—that crabbed old sergeant who never went to church, or would let anybody give him a tract, or read or advise him, or anything. Yes, she pretended to like him, because he had made friends with Brown

John! Such nonsense! when everybody knew it was only out of the spirit of contradiction, which, as dear Miss Lyndon remarked herself, seemed to govern everything she said and did.

All this, however, was kept as much as possible from Mr. Lyndon's observation, whose dignity would have been highly offended if any one had told him how his daughter-in-law was canvassed and criticised. He was partial to her himself, proud of her abilities and elegance, and in his secret soul, of her rank; and that so distinguished a member of his family should meet with anything but respect and consideration never entered his head till to-day. The more he thought over the affront, the more angry he grew, and the less disposed to forgive anybody who could, in his opinion, have prevented it.

The ladies saw his mood, and the dinner, as we observed, passed chiefly in silence. When, however, they were established in the drawing-room, and the tea was in progress, he suddenly addressed Walter, who was preparing his lessons for the next day.

'What was the name of Dr. Home's friend?'

'Randolph, grandpapa—*amabam, amabas, amabat*—bother this love, what stuff it is!'

'Randolph? I don't know the name. Do you know, Penny? do you, Adelaide?'

They both replied in the negative.

'Is he gentlemanly, Walter?' asked Miss Penelope.

'Very brown,' said Walter. '*I* like him—perhaps you won't—but then I like sensible people. And he did tumble the boys over in such a jolly way!'

'And a pretty thing for a stranger to do on his first appearance among us!' said Mr. Lyndon, angrily;

'enough to make him suppose there was really no respect or honour shown in the place. It is exceedingly annoying to *me;* none of you mind it, of course, but *I* do, and I shall take immediate steps to prevent its happening again. I shall call on Mr. Randolph to-morrow, and ask him here: and, Penelope, you must invite our friends to meet him, and we will endeavour to show him in what light our family is really looked upon in society. My grandson—a Lyndon—the heir of my name and property, to be so treated in the presence of a stranger! It is unpardonable, and I blame you both, I must say, for its having happened at all.'

'Well now, really,' put in Miss Lucy, hesitating, 'I do think, sir, it is rather hard to blame poor dear Adelaide, who of course would be liked and admired, and all that, if she could—I mean, who could be if she liked—no, I don't mean that, I am sure, Adelaide, I beg your pardon: but is it not hard that it should be your fault, you know?'

'What is my fault?' asked Lady Adelaide.

'Oh! not *fault,* exactly—but all this—Walter's snow-balls—Mr. Randolph—people talking—you can't help it, if they think you unpleasant, can you? Penny won't mind when I say so, but *I* do say it is hard, and not fair at all.'

'I don't know what you are talking about,' said Penelope, sharply; 'you had better get out the card-table: you do understand something about that.'

'Not much,' observed Mr. Lyndon. 'Come, Adelaide, my dear, we must be partners again, in spite of our quarrel last time.'

'Do you really want me to-night?' asked Adelaide, with a wistful glance at her boy and his books.

'Oh dear no, if not agreeable to yourself—the last thing I should ask for. Put back the table, Lucy—put it back; I do not want to be a tax on anybody's time, I am sure. We shall not play to-night, Lucy, at all, thank you.'

His face looked white with suppressed irritability: Penelope looked at Lucy, and shrugged her shoulders: Lady Adelaide, colouring deeply, went up to him, and laid her hand on his shoulder. 'To oblige me, sir, I think you will.'

'My dear Adelaide, I thank you most sincerely, but really, I should be sorry to take up your time simply for my amusement. It must, of course, be a great strain on your complaisance, and I hate to see people do a thing as a favour. Pray sit down again, and amuse yourself as you like best.'

But Adelaide stood still, and would not be repulsed. 'I can hardly believe, dear sir, that you are angry with me in earnest.'

'Angry! who said I was angry?' But looking up, and seeing her really distressed, his mood relaxed. 'I am not at all angry: how could I be so with *you?* I should never forgive myself if I was—I promised I never would be: in his last letter he begged me to be a father to you, Adelaide, and so I always have been, and always will. You went through enough for his sake to make you dear to us all, you did—poor, poor Walter!'

'*Walter!*' repeated a feeble voice, 'is he not come back yet?'

They all looked round with a start. Mrs. Lyndon, in her arm-chair by the fire, where she generally sat

knitting in silence, had laid down her work, and turned her face towards her husband, whose exclamation had roused her dormant recollections.

'Is the boy not come back yet, John? He promised I should see him in his uniform—I am afraid they won't make it to fit. Is he not come?'

Penelope stepped briskly up to her mother, and began changing her pillows.

'Oh dear, no, mamma! nobody can come this weather, you know; and we have got Adelaide here, and little Walter, and we are all as happy and merry as the day is long, don't you know? Are we not, Lucy?' (aside) 'Answer quick, can't you, child? Don't look so stupid, as if you had no sense!'

'Well, really, Pen dear, to speak the honest truth, I don't seem to think we *are* particularly happy and merry with Adelaide and Walter—I don't mean to say it is their fault—I'm sure, Adelaide, I do not wish to be rude, but you know one is not always in the humour to be good-humoured. It is nobody's fault I am sure.'

'What is Lucy talking about, Pen? Lucy always would talk, she is a giddy little thing. You must look after her, Pen.'

'I do, mamma'—(aside) 'much use it is, too!'

'But I want Walter, Pen; why does he not come when he promised? Oh now, I forgot—yes, and his pretty young wife is to come and stay with us, is not she? A sweet-looking creature, everybody says, is not she, Pen?'

'Very, ma'am,' said Penelope, drily.

'Ah, yes, I know she is; she is always good to me, poor silly old thing that I am. She is a dear creature,

Penny! you must take great care of her, that Walter may find her looking well when he comes.'

The tears stood in Miss Penny's eyes; she was of hard materials, but not adamant all through. Mr. Lyndon walked up and down the room; Lady Adelaide, pale as death, stood leaning on the back of a chair, her dark mournful eyes fixed on the gentle and harmless being.

'I shall soon have done his quilt, Penny; I always was a quick knitter, you know, and it must be got up and well aired; you must take care of that, Penny; you are a handy girl, and always were, only too quick tempered. Break yourself of that, my dear Penny, and do pick up my cotton. You should always remember—oh, dear! I don't know what I am talking about—I am growing very silly, aint I, dear? and Walter will think I don't look after his pretty wife—where is she?'

'Here, dear mother,' said Lady Adelaide, bending over her.

'Ah! is that you, my love? When did you come? and I hope you left all well at home. Your own dear mother, how is she?'

Lady Adelaide trembled violently; her voice was choked with weeping. She sank on her knee by Mrs. Lyndon's chair, and kissed the withered hand that held her own, and on which her tears fell fast. Penelope eyed her thoughtfully with a kind of grim compassion, and when the old lady looked up again, and stroking her daughter-in-law's dark hair, repeated in a coaxing tone, 'You'll take care of her, poor young thing, and help her, won't you, Pen?' could not help answering in a tone meant to be conciliatory,

'Yes, yes, ma'am, I'll do the best I can for her; I say, Adelaide, my dear, don't!'

Ashamed of her want of self-command, Lady Adelaide raised her head, and dashed away her tears; but Lucy, to whom anything of the sort was perilously contagious, broke out into a burst of piteous lamentation that roused Mr. Lyndon's wrath. Always most irritable when excited and nervous, it was a real relief to his feelings to vent them on somebody, and his distress at this scene took the form of very pungent remarks on the weakness of giving way and making displays of sensibility on every occasion—really, if there was to be any chance of living quietly in this world, people ought to practise a little self-control.

This had the desired effect, and the poor old lady, after maundering on for a little while longer about Walter's quilt, and his uniform, and his pretty young wife, gradually subsided into quietness, and then into a doze.

'I have never seen her so excited before,' whispered Adelaide, as they stood watching her.

'It was all your own doing, my dear,' said Penelope, who felt that she owed herself a little refreshing stimulus after her unusual exertion of tenderness; 'it was hearing us talk about that child's adventure set her mind working; that was all your fault, you know, and then, as my father justly observes, such painful want of self-control—'

'I am very sorry,' said Lady Adelaide, in a tone of sincere apology; submitting to the rebuke for the sake of the sympathy that had preceded it. Her look appeased Mr. Lyndon, and after a little hesitation, he graciously renewed his proposal of a rubber, which,

sick at heart as she was, she took good care this time not to reject.

This evening amusement, which, according to the attending circumstances, may be either a very agreeable one, or very much the reverse, was the nightly torment and terror of her life; for it hardly ever failed to cause an amount of heat and irritability on the part of two, at least, of the players, to which no repetition could inure her. At this moment it felt more irksome than usual, and a sigh of impatient weariness as she took her place, brought a significant exchange of glances between her sisters-in-law. Miss Penny hailed it as an excellent omen; it made all the difference in the world to herself and her partner; for if their respective powers had been estimated, taking Lucy as the unit 1, it would have appeared that Penelope stood as 5, Adelaide, when she played her best, as 4, Mr. Lyndon as 3; leaving a balance of 1 in favour of the two latter. Any preoccupation of mind was apt to reduce Adelaide as low as 2, and by its ruffling effect on her partner, bring him down, nobody could calculate where; defeat and humiliation the inevitable consequence.

Mr. Lyndon was pretty well aware of this himself, and it was with some anxiety that he watched the beautiful face of his daughter-in-law, which, though it had now regained its usual composure, looked pale and worn, and much too abstracted to promise well for success. He addressed her in his most winning tones.

'Now, Adelaide my dear, we will show them what a little good play is; you and I didn't learn of Conway for nothing.'

This was a favourite allusion to a great-uncle of hers, at whose house much of her youth had been spent, and

whose abilities as a soldier, whatever their merits, were lost sight of by posterity, in the fame that he had acquired as a whist-player—a Buonaparte in his way, of whose best days marvels were told, whose traditions yet ranked as history among zealots of the game.

The prestige of his reputation clung to his niece, whether she liked it or not, and in spite of all she was constantly doing to overthrow it. Nothing could ever convince Mr. Lyndon that any one who had been in the general's house could be anything but an enthusiast in his favourite pursuit. It was his special compliment to his daughter-in-law, when he meant to show her extra politeness and encouragement, and he was glad to see that the mention of the name startled her from her reverie.

'What would I not give,' he continued, as he shuffled his cards with his usual care, 'for a fifth of the opportunities you must have had, my love! How much you must have learnt merely by looking on!'

She shook her head with a faint smile; her recollections of that period were not exactly what he supposed.

'Dear me, papa,' cried Penelope, 'do you imagine Adelaide had nothing else to do at General Conway's than to play cards? You forget she was learning all the dead languages, and all the living mischiefs that were ever invented; witness the wonderful education Walter is receiving, of which we have to-day reaped the benefit. The general's house was a temple of science, was it not, Adelaide? Had you not a whole college of instructors there to bring your mind into proper cultivation—as the correct term is now?'

'I had only one there,' said Lady Adelaide, who

never could be brought without reluctance to speak of her former life.

'And did you let him teach you Latin, mamma?' called out Walter from his distant table.

'Yes, sir; how is it you are attending to us instead of to your work?'

'No, mamma:—I mean, I am attending; but I could not help wondering how anybody could learn such horrid stuff unless they were obliged. How you must have detested the man!'

'I had no cause, Walter,' she said; but her brow knit, as if pained by the remembrance.

'Was he a relation of yours?' asked Penelope, eyeing her curiously.

'No—he was my uncle's private secretary.'

'And entrusted with your education—rash, was it not? There, no offence, my dear; you need not blush so; bless me, one must measure one's words as if they had treason in them. I only meant that *when* you were young and handsome, his risk might have been worth considering.'

'That is so long ago now,' said Lady Adelaide, good-humouredly, though with an effort that showed the subject pained her, 'that we need not speculate on what might or might not have happened.'

But their curiosity being now excited, they began to ply her with questions, which her utmost skill in giving short answers was not sufficient effectually to parry; so that they ascertained that the private secretary was a gentleman of birth and breeding, exceedingly clever and agreeable, poor, young, and highly esteemed by the general; and then came the inquiry, 'What became of him?'

She did not know.

'Did he leave the general?'

'Yes.'

'While you were there?'

'Yes.'

'Why?'

Lady Adelaide looked across the table at her partner. 'Are you ready, sir?'

'Ready! I should think so, when all this chattering is over. Come, Penelope, you are only trying to put off the evil moment; take leave of your sixpences, for you won't see them again.'

Luckless was the speech, and bootless the boast; Lady Adelaide had never held such bad cards, or shown so little energy in making the best of them. On the strength of his good resolutions, Mr. Lyndon endured the two first deals with grim resignation; but the tide of ill-fortune setting in stronger than usual, his patience gave way after the third.

'How infamously you and Lucy played that last hand!' was his complimentary remark to the victorious Penelope.

'How can you say so, my dear father? We won the trick.'

'Won the trick—if you had had an ounce of sense, you would have won three tricks. My partner gave you the game—forced it into your hands, as it were; you could hardly help getting everything; a baby in arms could not help it! Adelaide gives her cards away—positively gives them away!'

'Small generosity to give what she cannot keep,' said Lady Adelaide.

'I don't know anything about generosity, I never

heard of it in whist before; I only know *facts*, and that Walter there would have had more sense than to lead out spades when you did. And as for Lucy, I suppose her partner admires her style, so I have no right to complain; but such egregious ignorance of the commonest rules of play, I never could have believed in, never! I would rather people sat with their hands before them, than that they should attempt what they cannot do with ordinary chance of not being ridiculous.'

A worm will turn when trodden upon; and Lucy could not stand this.

'Oh, sir, I *did* play—now didn't I, Adelaide—didn't I trump your queen? No, you took mine—how was it? I always forget what has been played, but I know I trumped something.'

'You trumped my king,' growled Penelope.

'So I did! of course, or ought I not to? You always tell me to make tricks, and I never can remember when I should and when I shouldn't: but did not I play better than usual now, Adelaide?'

'I dare say you did, my dear; you might easily do that,' said Adelaide, serenely.

Mr. Lyndon gave a grim smile, and shuffled the cards.

'Walter, your mother and I are nearly ruined! A little more of her good play, and I shall have to sell your inheritance, my boy!'

'And old Spindler will buy it, of course,' returned Walter, looking up from his Latin, 'and then he will be lord of the manor in earnest; I know he thinks himself nearly as good already—Bob Grayling told me so.'

It was now Mr. Lyndon's turn to grow red, while his breast heaved with indignation. 'He may think

himself what he pleases, and Bob Grayling may say what he pleases; I have not the slightest objection—none in the world. The very idea is so preposterous, it is not likely it should have occurred to him; a respectable civil neighbour as he has been so long, I should be sorry to see him placed in any position to make him ridiculous. So if you please, Walter, not to make a joke of anything so intensely revolting to common sense and propriety. Mr. Spindler is a most worthy man, and because he has invested his money for the present in the Lyndon lands, that is no reason why he should be laughed at. Yes, you may look saucily at your mother, sir—as saucily as you please. You are not master here yet, I will have you remember; and though your mamma may allow this behaviour, *I* don't!'

'Walter!' said his mother, holding up her finger. His head dropped over his grammar directly; only emerging again when nobody was looking, to make a grimace of intense rebellion at his grandfather, who had now returned to his game. His irritability was so rapidly increasing, the emergency quickened his partner's zeal, and she compelled herself to more attention. They played old-fashioned long whist; the game got to a critical point; a slip or two from Lucy having altered the relative position of the combatants, the interest grew exciting: three out of the four faces grew as passionately eager as if hundreds had been at stake, and their skill suffered in proportion. All depended on one trick; Mr. Lyndon, in his anxiety, played the card he did not intend; Lucy, in her hurry to profit by it, threw away another; Lady Adelaide brought out a trump, that (to their shame be it spoken) nobody dreamt of—and won the game.

'Hurrah!' cried Mr. Lyndon, and starting from his chair, nearly overturned the table: the cards were scattered, and the candles saved with difficulty. 'I really beg your pardon, my dears,' said he, in the liveliest spirits; 'but a victory like that with every earthly chance against us—you played superbly, my dear Adelaide—magnificently! I do not know if that was some of the private secretary's teaching, but it was a Conway stroke, all over.'

'I am not so sure at all!' cried Penelope, mightily vexed; 'I do not understand about that heart; I cannot imagine how it was, unless there was a revoke. It *must* have been a revoke. Let us see the tricks.'

But the cards had got mixed in their fall, and investigation came too late. Lucy was appealed to; she dared to say it was, but Adelaide didn't mean to, she was sure—such mistakes would occur—it had occurred to herself sometimes. Mr. Lyndon furiously repudiated the charge against his partner; he tried to recal the cards that had been played, so as to disprove it; Miss Penny disputed his assertions; they grew warm, hot, irate in the argument; till Lucy shed tears, and the poor old lady woke up in a flutter, to ask if it was morning?

Lady Adelaide, already out of spirits, fiercely appealed to by both parties, and satisfying neither, retired to her arm-chair by her boy's side for comfort. His badly written exercise, and slate all over smears and soldiers, were often her best refreshment. But even these failed to cheer just now; she was fretted beyond her powers of endurance, and the louder the voices grew, the more expressive became her look of vexation; till it drew forth at last such indignant comments, that she was

glad to tell Walter his bed-time was come, and make it an excuse for leaving the room.

This was her hour of respite, and neither she nor Walter would ever relinquish it to anybody. It was the season of confidence to which they, by mutual consent, postponed all such expressions and feelings as were too interesting for public observation. Walter might be sleepy over his lessons, but he was never too sleepy to chat with his mamma, to read a psalm with her, and to repeat his evening prayer. She was all his own at these moments—all softness, tenderness, and indulgence; never looked severe, or gave dry answers, as she did downstairs, but smiled at him, and listened to him, and always bent over him after he was in bed, for a last kiss, looking so beautiful that, as he told Sophy Home in confidence, he never could marry anybody, because nobody could ever be a bit like his own mamma. To which Sophy's complimentary answer was, that it was not very likely that anybody like his beautiful mamma would think of marrying a conceited little bit of a monkey like *him*.

Now if anything fidgetted the rest of the family, it was this bed-time of Walter's. Nobody ever imagined that there could be any harm in it, but the fact of those two being so glad to get away and be by themselves, was what human nature was not to be expected to endure night after night without jealousy. Mr. Lyndon always fretted till his daughter-in-law came down again, and very often made some excuse for sending for her. She was longer, he thought, than usual this evening, and the entry of two visitors, who in spite of the severity of the weather, had just dropped in, according to Cannymoor custom, to talk over the events

of the day, furnished him with a good reason for despatching Lucy upstairs with a pungent message. Lucy found her standing, as if there was no such thing as frost, watching the stars from the staircase window.

'Is there anything to be seen, my dear?' she cried, with some curiosity.

'Come and look,' was the answer. Lucy came, but saw nothing particular. 'La, my dear, I only see stars; I thought there was something new.'

'Is there nothing new to you there?' asked Adelaide, mildly.

'Dear me, no—why should there be? The stars are always the same, are they not? Do come down; it looks so odd for you to be standing here staring out of the window at nothing.'

'Do you remember,' said Adelaide, thoughtfully, without seeming to hear the last remark, 'what Walter said when he was a little fellow—'Mamma, I know now what the stars are—they are *angels' eyes?*'

'To be sure, and very pretty and clever it was of the dear child. My dear, there are Mr. Spindler and his cousin——'

'Ay, Lucy, but supposing now the boy's fancy were true, and each of those bright points were an eye of sublimest intellect, power, and holiness, watching all we did, said, and thought—which of us would dare to let it meet our own?'

'My dear Adelaide!'

'Which of us would be so callous to shame as to be ready to let all those meannesses be noticed, weighed, and registered, that make us day after day despise our fellow-beings, and ourselves still more? Which of us could challenge such a jury to sift our motives, our

wishes, our springs of action; or feel content that judges who never knew the power of temptation, the force of provocation, or the weakness of man's utmost strength, should calmly criticise our doings, and esteem us as we deserve?'

'Adelaide dear, I wish you would not talk in that very unpleasant way.'

'The child's fancy was wrong,' she continued, her dark glance still fixed intently on the heavens; 'wrong especially in *this*, that it put more on angels than angelic power could bear. Nothing but infinite patience, infinite long-suffering, and infinite love—feeling for human nature, from having shared its weakness, and hoping in it, because itself the root of its strength—could have looked on the paltry littlenesses of a single generation, and not have swept the whole race away!'

Lucy looked at her in fear and perplexity. She had too much awe of her sister-in-law's attainments to attempt to argue, even if she had understood the full meaning of what she said; but she felt that some sensible remark was due, and was rather put to it to devise one.

'I have always thought the stars a very pretty study,' looking up with some complacency to the sky, 'and I know when I went to school, the use of the globes was a very particular item in the bills, and very proper that it should be so. If I had a memory like yours—but I really *do* remember something about the Ram, the Bull, the Heavenly Twins—by the way, how a ram and a bull could be twins at all, I don't quite see—but I suppose it is only a poetical way of expressing it. Well, my dear, now we have thoroughly enjoyed this beautiful

night, I think perhaps it will look better if we go down to our friends.'

Lucy escaped down stairs: Lady Adelaide, following at her lesiure, heard her, as she entered, eagerly declaring, 'The stars are so beautiful, and Adelaide and I do so doat upon the stars!'

The laugh that greeted this remark was of all sounds the one the fair widow detested most: the voice was cracked, and there was an accompanying chuckle of conscious cleverness that she never could encounter without impatience and aversion. It was, in fact, no other than the Mr. Spindler already mentioned, who had called, as he occasionally did in the evening, with his cousin Miss Chatterley, and of whom a few words must be spoken here; for if once they begin themselves, there will be no further opportunity.

The sketch of Cannymoor politics given by Bob the driver to Mr. Randolph was, as might have been expected from the shrewd class to which the informant belonged, pretty accurate. Mr. Spindler, who had made a great deal of money nobody knew exactly how, though some Shareham people were impertinent enough to express divers strong opinions thereon, had long cherished a secret ambition to become a landed proprietor, and had only been baffled in his scheme of reuniting all the Lyndon property by the present occupant stepping into the Manorhouse before him. The Lyndons had a happy way of looking upon this old gentleman, by an elegant kind of fiction, as an agent or representative of their house, and patronized and welcomed him outwardly, while they were rather afraid and very jealous of him in their hearts. He, on the other hand, observed great respect towards the family,

and always appeared as their zealous, deferential friend; while he took care that very little should go on in their household or affairs of which he was not informed, sometimes before they were themselves. Miss Chatterley, who kept his house, equalled and seconded him in this sociable curiosity; with this difference, that the gentleman sought information chiefly to turn it to account, and the lady to impart it to others.

If to this it be necessary to add any description, we may just mention that Mr. Spindler was a little, ordinary-looking man in a brown wig, with his hands perpetually diving into his pockets, as if he had mislaid a sixpence, which he was constantly on the point of finding, but had never found yet: and that Miss Chatterley was past the bloom of youth, and therefore very properly made up for the lack of tints in her complexion by boundless variety in her costume.

The moment Lady Adelaide appeared, looking very tall, distant, and polite, she was assailed with affectionate inquiries after 'that angel of a little boy!—so shocked to hear of his being so treated!'

'I assure your ladyship,' cried Miss Chatterley, 'directly we heard of it, cousin Abel and I, which we did just at tea-time, by the merest chance in the world from our maid Phœbe having met Mrs. Grayling's cook, who had seen Bob Lowe from the George at Shareham, we put down our cups, and couldn't have tasted another drop, not if it was ever so! Such a thing to happen in broad daylight! Pitchforks and bludgeons the ruffians had—I hope no pistols; but really, one never knows. How is the little darling, my lady?'

'Walter is perfectly well, thank you,' said Lady

Adelaide, not at all recognising anybody's right to make a little darling of her son—'he was only teased by a few mischievous boys.'

'No, really! well to be sure! We were so frightened, do you know, my Lady—Abel and I—that we put on our things, all I don't know how, and off we went to the rectory to inquire, because we had heard that some strange gentleman had rescued the sweet darling from the ruffians, and had been wounded and carried into Dr. Home's; so it was only civil just to ask, and when we got there, the maid, Colly, as they call her, didn't like to trouble us to go in—a very considerate person is Colly, always—but we knew the dear old Doctor would be so hurt if we did not step in for a minute; so in we went, just to say "How d'ye do?" and sure enough, there was the strange gentleman, taking tea with the Doctor and Sophy, and going to stop all night.'

'He is an old pupil of Dr. Home's,' put in Miss Penelope; 'Walter told us so when he came in. What sort of person is he?'

'Oh really, I can hardly say, dear Miss Lyndon: you know one does not like to appear impertinent, and pushing, and inquisitive, and I hardly looked at him: we only stayed a few minutes; but I should say he is a good-looking man, between thirty and forty, very brown, tanned with his travels: thick dark eyebrows and mustachios, and such clever eyes; very gentlemanly and civil—particularly so—asked all kinds of questions about the place and the society, and all that; at least, he was most attentive when I was mentioning how lucky he was to come into the neighbourhood while your family were here; and seemed to wish to know so

much, that really I felt as if I had all the talk to myself, which is always uncomfortable. "Dear me, Mr. Randolph," said I, at last, "I can stay no longer to talk to you; if I were to sit here all night, praising Mr. Lyndon's family, I should not say half enough. You must just make their acquaintance yourself and judge for yourself;" and he made the politest bow in the world and said—no, I cannot repeat what he said. Is he not charming, Abel?'

'No doubt, my dear,' said Mr. Spindler, with a knowing smile; 'no doubt. A man of fortune I understand—and a man of the world, I can see. You must keep him at Cannymoor, Miss Lyndon; you must keep him at Cannymoor. Men like that don't come all this way just to go away again. He has his reasons, depend upon it: what they are, concern none of us, so we need not trouble ourselves about them; but if he wants to be comfortable, he had better stay where he is, and we can find him a snug lodging somewhere among us. You must look him up, Mr. Lyndon.'

'I should have waited on him, of course,' said that gentleman, rather drily; 'or on any friend of the rector's. As to detaining him, or anybody else at Cannymoor, having no interest in the matter, I prefer leaving them to themselves.'

'Ah! you great men are always so indifferent; it is nothing to you whether houses are well let or empty,' chuckled Mr. Spindler, with a sudden dive after the lost sixpence, from which nothing ensued; 'now poor landlords like me have to reckon every chance, and keep our eye on every safe tenant we run against. I am very angry, my Lady, about the treatment of my little favourite, Walter; if they are tenants of mine,

I'll handle them for it, you may depend—pretty roughly, too!'

'Pray, Spindler, do not trouble yourself,' interrupted Mr. Lyndon, reddening; 'I shall inquire myself, which will be quite sufficient, I hope.'

'Oh! more than sufficient, Mr. Lyndon; and pray use my name as much as you please; threaten as much as you like; the scoundrels! The first man who is behind with his rent shall smart for it. But what was it put them out, do you know?'

'Why the fact is, Mr. Spindler,' said Penelope, with a significant glance, 'that Walter is made so much of, and taught a smattering of so many things, that he has set up for being cleverer than his neighbours, and must needs go showing off his cleverness to the village boys, and they pelted him for his pains. I hope it will be a lesson to him for life, that is all I can say.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Spindler, shaking his head, 'it is a great mistake letting young folks learn so much as they do now; it only makes them idle. Give me a good sharp lad with an eye to the main chance, who, if he gets a halfpenny, finds a way to make a penny of it; and I wouldn't give you sixpence for all the books and experiments and apparatus that ever were invented. Those are *my* principles, my Lady,' rubbing his hands; 'and I fancy they've answered pretty well—eh?'

Lady Adelaide lifted her eyes from her work with a look of haughty surprise that would have repelled a less daring assailant; but it was not so easy to repel Mr. Spindler. That she disliked him cordially, he was perfectly aware, and it seemed only to add to the keen interest he took in her every word, look, and action. When she was present, whatever he might

be saying or doing, he never relaxed his vigilant observation for a moment; and the more she fenced herself in her proud reserve, the more resolutely he came to the attack.

'The people hereabouts take such notions into their heads, my Lady,' moving across the room to sit near her; 'do you know, I have actually heard some of them remark on your visits to that sulky-looking fellow, Sergeant Wade, as if they were quite jealous of your condescension being so thrown away; while I dare say, if all was known, he is a good civil sort of old chap at heart—eh? Does not your ladyship find him so?'

'Sometimes.'

'Just so—not always civil even to you. But talks now and then, and lets you into his past life, I dare say. Very interesting, no doubt—and very good in your ladyship to listen.'

'There is not much goodness in listening to what is interesting,' said Lady Adelaide.

'Then it *is* interesting—hem—your ladyship admits it. What a singular character he is!—seen plenty of service?—served under some of your ladyship's family, I think—no? I beg pardon, it was my mistake. At any rate, Cannymoor ought to be very grateful to any lady who deigns to civilize so rough a subject as Sergeant Wade. Well, Susan, now we are assured that all is well here, I think, as it is getting late, we must be going.'

But they did not go the sooner for saying this; Miss Susan was not so easily stopped in her flow of discourse, and they stayed, and gossiped, and drank hot elder wine, and discussed the whole neighbourhood, and kept up a stream of conjectures, disputes, and petty scandal, such

as only could be attained by hearty and constant practice; and which, jarring as it did on Adelaide's taste and feelings, she had no choice but to sit and endure politely, till she was almost desperate.

And this was a specimen of her every-day life, which she was to lead, as far as she could see, for years yet to come!

On her way to her own room, when release came at last, she looked in again at her boy. He was in the sound, deep sleep of health; his brown hair rumpled, his cheeks glowing, and far beyond the power of her kiss to waken. And yet there was a passion in that kiss that thrilled through every fibre of her frame. For he was her all on earth—all she had now to show in return for her once bright heritage—youth, hope, love, and home! And as she bent over his pillow, and lightly parted the hair from his flushed temples, it seemed to dawn upon her, as if for the first time, how fearfully precious he was.

Words had been spoken that day that had stirred up the depths of memory, where its waters were of Marah; and now the waves began to flow over her soul. That irrevocable past, with its opening holiday scene of indulgence and mirth, and intellectual enjoyment, and the homage of friends and attendants, before she had ever seen a face that did not smile on her, or heard a voice that uttered reproof, contention, or ill-will—that spring-time of joyous existence, when existence itself was happiness—succeeded by that stern and wintry battle-field into which, untrained and unarmed, she had dared to enter, and on the outskirts whereof she was now fighting her daily inglorious fight, without banner, clarion, or shield!

And with these shifting scenes, came a form, belonging alike to both periods; in the one, so full of tenderness that its memory brought a yearning with it almost too much to bear—in the other, so terrible in its unforgiving severity, that its aspect chilled unto death. Others came and went, faded and returned—but this was fixed in its twofold identity; and pointing to the gladness gone—to the struggles endured—to two graves on the far Eastern shore, seemed to repeat that fearful assertion of Scripture, that has rung the knell of so many generations: 'For all this his anger is *not* turned away, but his hand is stretched out still!'

So vivid grew the impression, that she with difficulty arrested the impulse to throw her arms in defence around her unconscious boy.

'Oh, not on him—not on *him!*' was her unspoken prayer. 'I have borne much—I have much still to bear—and I will bear it till I die; it cannot be for long; but not this, not *this*, or my heart would break before its time!'

She kissed the boy again, and was moving away, when he half opened the sleepiest eyes in the world, and muttered, in that peculiarly inharmonious cadence belonging to somnolency, 'Hold fast, mamma, all right —I knew I could pull you up.'

'You, my darling?' she repeated, while the tears started in her eyes; but with a most unsentimental grunt, he rolled over, and disappeared beneath the bedclothes, to emerge no more that night.

CHAPTER III.

Béralde.—Voilà un médecin, vraiment, que paraît fort habile.
Argan.—Oui; mais il va un peu bien vîte.
Béralde.—Tous les grands médecins sont comme cela.

MOLIÈRE.

DR. HOME and his guest sat over the fire; a little pipkin of mulled port dexterously balancing itself on a pile of red coals, and a tumbler at each gentleman's elbow, that had already been filled once. After they were released from the attention of Mr. Spindler and Miss Chatterley, Randolph had gradually grown more communicative, and Sophy had been kept up long past her usual hour, listening to his wonderful experiences all over the world; and had gone to bed at last, with her head so full of Arabs and camels, and Nile boatmen, and prairie-fires, and bison-hunting, that it was a question whether she would ever go to sleep. There was a witchery about it all, that neither the old man nor the child could resist; and Colly, who came in and out when she pleased, found many more excuses than usual for hanging about the room, to catch a few of the anecdotes. The rector failed not to draw his friend's attention to this last circumstance. Maurice could have no idea what a sensible woman that was; he might tell his stories to a dozen fine ladies, and not one would enter into the spirit of them better than she did, or repeat them again half as well. She might jumble the

geography a little, perhaps—candour obliged him to admit that—but after all, there were greater qualities even than geography. 'You couldn't puzzle her in the Land of Canaan, clever as you think yourself; for such a Bible scholar as Colly is not to be had, sir—no, not in all your fine new schools, that are to make us so much wiser than our grandfathers.'

In point of fact, the old gentleman, while laughing at the admiration of the others, was to the full as much charmed as they were, if not more. It was like a romance to these quiet people, with their unvarying routine of homely duties and simple pleasures, 'never heard of half a mile from home;' and they looked at the man who had seen and heard and done so much, as if they could hardly believe he could be of the same order of beings as themselves.

'Well, well,' said Dr. Home, when he was once more alone with his guest, 'it does one good to be reminded God's horizon reaches a little farther than ours. One is apt to forget that one's own little world is not the only one the sun shines upon; and the longer one forgets, the smaller that same little world seems to grow. And now, Maurice, my lad, you have had enough, in all conscience, of foreign lands—what is your purpose in your own? Duty begins there, my good friend; did come all this way to see your old tutor, and get him to help you find it out?'

'My future plans are quite undecided, Doctor. I shall be glad to listen to any advice you are good enough to give me. It was always worth hearing.'

'Ay, but is it worth following, if it clashes with your own notions? How can I advise a man whose wishes I know nothing about? Hast any wishes, lad?'

'One, Doctor, and a hopeless one.'

'Hopeless? I know no such word; it is not to be found in the Christian's vocabulary: hope *abideth*, Maurice, mind you. What is your wish, my boy?'

'To forget.'

'Ay, ay; is it so? And in your experience as a traveller, have you found that distance and change weaken memory, or strengthen it?'

'That is a question I have tried in vain to answer as I wished, or I should not be here.'

'Maurice, why try to forget a lost blessing? Why not look on it as only gone before?'

Randolph smiled bitterly, and shook his head. His old friend watched his dark features with anxiety and interest, and his voice became womanly in its gentle compassion.

'And it was this, then, that made you a wanderer, Maurice; and its memory in all your wanderings has haunted you still?'

Randolph bowed silently, with his eyes fixed on the fire.

'Is it past remedy, Maurice?'

'Not quite.' His eye gleamed sternly as he spoke.

'Is it in the power of man to relieve you of the burden?'

The dark face grew darker; the athletic frame seemed to vibrate with the consciousness of strength and determination, as he answered, in a low tone, 'It *shall* be.'

The old man looked at him with increasing concern and gravity.

'And the remembrance itself, Maurice, that has caused you so much trouble—what is it?'

Randolph paused before he replied in the same quiet deep voice as before, 'The remembrance of a heartless wrong.'

Dr. Home's ruddy, hale countenance lost every trace of colour for a moment. 'A *wrong*, Maurice—and it is this you have tried to forget, and not a sorrow—and gone so far to accomplish it, and failed? Lad, lad! I could have showed thee a much quicker way, and a surer way; I could show it thee now.'

'And that is—'

'To *forgive* it.'

'Never, sir, until the wrong be avenged. I should despise myself if I thought I could be so weak.'

'Then your purpose in England after all these years, Maurice, is to be revenged on an enemy?'

'Something very like it, sir.'

'You dare not sit there, and insult my profession and grey hairs, lad, by telling me you are coolly planning to break the laws of God and man for some senseless punctilio of honour?'

'No, my dear, excellent friend; rest easy on that score. I am not quite so bad as you think. Some day I may find courage to tell you all—but now—not yet.'

'I will not press your confidence, boy; when you have a mind to give it, it will not be thrown away. But one request I am going to make, and you will not say me nay. Spend some time with us, now you *are* come. Your revenge, whatever it may be, since it has kept so long, will keep a little longer; try what a little plain country life will do for it. You are used to rough it, and there is your room for you, as long as you can stay, and a hearty welcome. Sophy will be delighted; ay, and Colly too, that she will! There is the spirit

of a prince in Colly, if she only had opportunities for showing it. Come now, Maurice, promise me.'

And in the warmth of his eagerness, his hospitable nature doubly stimulated by a vague alarm lest his friend should commit some deadly sin as soon as he was out of his parish, he rose from his seat, and caught his guest by both hands.

'Stay with me, Maurice! You have no home of your own, you say, no family claims; you have the means of doing what you please, give me the comfort of your society; it does me so much good! Let the injuries alone; at any rate until you come across the enemy; who knows how your mind may change by then? Who knows but you may live to entreat me to forget all you have just said, and to wonder you ever said it? I have seen stranger things in my time.'

'I tell you, Doctor,' interrupted the traveller, hastily, 'I could never live to be a thing so mean.'

'What? never live to know the blessedness of pardon? Yet I have seen thy cheeks glow with the old beautiful stories we read in days gone by; of the coals heaped on the head of the wrong-doer; of the divine nature breaking out of the veil of humanity, when man emulated God's loftiest attributes; time was you felt all this, Maurice. Eh! but it has been a sore wrong that has thus changed thee, lad!'

'It was,' said Randolph, mournfully; 'for it weakened my trust in all that is good, and in myself most of all. But to believe I could ever feel again—no! you do not know what you ask, Doctor, when you tell me to stay here. Let me go; I am a restless, evil, unthankful spirit, who can only hinder your good, peace-loving life. You had better let me go; I had almost

resolved to start again to-morrow. Sooner or later we shall wish I had.'

'You came of your own free-will, Maurice, but you shall not go away without mine. It is my duty to lay hands on thee, and forbid thy going one step further in thine evil purpose. Here is thy tent pitched for the present, uneasy Ishmaelite that thou art; and it will be very hard to find any one to quarrel with here, except it be from their excess of zeal and friendliness, like those good folks we had just now, and whom I thought we should never get rid of. I'll find you work to do, never fear! We will have a school lecture or two, and you shall tell them all about your travels, and give us a few hints for our next missionary meeting; a capital idea, that! Ay, ay, and perhaps you might give 'em a touch of natural philosophy, and with the help of a few experiments convince them my little friend Walter is no conjuror, eh? Plenty to do, much wholesomer and happier work than raking up old grievances; so give me your hand, my boy, and promise.'

'Please, sir, you're wanted,' said Colly, putting in her head.

'Promise!' repeated the old rector, impatiently.

Randolph gave a heavy sigh, and promised, and his host left the room.

The traveller was scarcely left alone, before he became powerfully agitated. The emotions he had kept down before his old friend, swelled the veins of his forehead, and brought out the big drops like beads. He walked up and down the room with passionate strides, tried to open the window in vain; flung himself again into his seat, and buried his face in his hands, while broken

murmurs fell unconsciously from his lips. 'So near, and yet so far; further divided at this moment than when thousands of miles lay between! Why did I come here at all? what did I mean by it? Am I a child, to be swayed from my purposes by a word—or am I a fool, an empty, prating, impulse-driven fool? Something of both it seems to me. What good could I expect would come of my being here? I know it would be better for me to start off at once, and try once more whether change and travel will do for me what they have not done for me yet: anything would be better than to be haunted by that one remembrance, now melting me into childishness, and now stinging me into a mad desire for revenge. So many years, and that scornful look, those disdainful words, unobliterated, unforgotten still! How little knows my good, kind old friend, what he is so earnestly bent on doing. But it is done, and now things may take their course for me, I care not. How close this little room is! I must have air, or I shall go mad.'

He had just started up, when his host re-entered in his great coat. 'Sorry to leave you, Maurice, my boy. You will find a good fire in your room; trust Colly for that! but I must be off. Just like women—here have I been week after week bullying her to bring her baby to church for baptism, and she put it off; sponsors couldn't come, or no shoes, or no bonnet, or some silly excuse or other, and now she fancies she is ill, and the child is ill, and there they all are at their wit's end, and sending for me in the middle of this sharp night without the slightest compunction. Have you had enough wine?—sure?—then I'll just turn this hot stuff into this bottle, and take it with me. It will warm

their hearts at any rate. Take care of yourself, Maurice.'

'Must you go? have you no curate?'

'Curate! no, indeed, nor any such luxury; nor doctor either, within five miles. They expect me to prescribe for body and soul at once. I say, where are you going?'

'Only to find my cloak and hat, sir.'

'You are not coming too; stuff—nonsense—after your cold journey. Go up to bed, sir, this minute, or I shall be setting you five hundred lines of Virgil. I know I shall.'

Randolph's reply to this threat was by bringing his cigar to Colly's kitchen-candle, nodding in her face in return for the light, and drawing his hat over his brows.

'Well, well,' said the old gentleman, after a little consideration, 'have your own way, and you'll live the longer. It never hurts a man to be reminded of his baptism, and in your case, perhaps, the oftener the better.'

The cottage to which the rector was summoned was on the moor; and starry and glorious as was the night, as soon as they had left the shelter of the village, the wind came down upon them keen enough to try the hardihood of any pedestrian, to say nothing of the snow, that lay there, often ankle deep. Randolph at first did not recognise the lad who brought the summons, till Dr. Home stopped to recover his breath for a minute, and relieve his feelings at the expense of the messenger.

'I wonder when people will learn common sense, and to do the right thing at the right time! Why could not that poor babe have been brought to the church

properly, instead of my being sent for in the middle of the night, when I can hardly get along? Stephen, you young villain, I am surprised you had the face to come near me after your behaviour this afternoon.'

Stephen grumbled something about 'wouldn't for a long time, but mother would have it.'

'If your mother desired you to come, you ought not to have "wouldn't" at all. Come, let us walk on, or she will be anxious. What is the matter with them, all in this hurry?'

'I doan't like to say.'

'Never mind whether you like it or not, that is not of the slightest consequence; only tell me directly.'

'You'll be angry with me.'

'Then it is some prank of yours, as I suspected. Angry with you? I should rather think so, indeed!'

'Nay, sir, it warn't my doing, exactly, but the young 'uns this morning got to play, and Sergeant Wade's garden is nigh *ourn*, you know, and they throwed snowballs right agin his winder; and he come out and swore at 'em, and mother, she run, hearing the noise, and she did call him pretty strong names, sure—'

'No doubt. Well!'

'Well, sir, he said nought to her, only looked wicked like, as he do when he is put up; and mother, she got more mad than ever, and she scoffed at him, and snapped her fingers at him and at all the powers of darkness, she said, and he looked very bitter, and banged his door in her face.'

'Civil, certainly; but rather what might have been expected. But how has this—'

'Well, sir, this evening, what does he do, but come and stand right in our door, as we was all at supper,

looking as savage as a bear, and says he, "Is it true what I hear, mistress, that your lads and such like, have been ill-treating my Lady's boy?" says he, and he shook his fist when he said it; and mother, she up quite bold, and says she, "Suppose they did, Sergeant Wade, what have you to say to that, I should like to know?" for you see, it put her out that he should come interfering, else she'd blowed me about it just before he come. "What have I to say?" says he, holding up his great bony finger. "Why just this—if a hair of that child's head is hurt, it will be the bitterest day *you* ever saw, any of you. Have some thought of your *own*, woman!" says he, and points right at the babby. "I know it's not yet even as much of a Christian as *you* can make it;" and he walked off with a horrid laugh, and mother screeched and caught up the little 'un, and set her off yowling, and they've been bad ever since.'

'And it was the pointing of the old man's finger that disagreed with them, eh?'

'I don't know what it was, sir, but mother was in a peck of troubles about it, along of the babby not being christened, you know, sir—'

'Ay, ay; you think that is a magic charm, to keep bad luck out of your house; you will not come and receive the blessing at the proper times, but when you have called the devil up by envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, you expect me to come and lay him for you. Suppose you run on before, and say I'm coming. There, Maurice, there is a specimen of the understandings you are to help to enlighten. I shall have all the difficulty in the world to drive this out of their foolish heads. A woman storms at her neighbour,

... over her baby, and then, when she and ... took the worse, the neighbour has bewitched ... I only wish he had given her something harder ... silly creature; and so I shall tell her.'

Randolph touched his arm. 'Tell me first, who is that ... there?'

'Where? I see nought. Yes, now I do, and no wonder you ask, and no wonder our scapegrace scudded past him so uncommonly fast. The old fellow guesses I have been sent for, and is hanging about to enjoy the fright he has given them, and jeer at me. Hulloa, sergeant! a sharp night, eh? You have seen sharper ones though, I dare say, in your time.'

The person so addressed, a tall, weatherbeaten figure, turned his face towards the speaker, showing in the pale starlight the dim outline of stern, haggard features, long shaggy hair and beard, and grey eyes, full of wild fierce light, that at times almost resembled that of insanity. He put his forefinger slowly to his cap, but made no answer.

'Hard weather for old fellows like you and me,' continued the cheery old rector; 'but we are both old soldiers, and must stick to our colours, come what may, eh?'

Something approaching to a grim smile wrinkled the hard face for a moment, and a deep voice came out through the tangled mass of hair. 'Ay, people think to come round one that way always; I've heard it twenty times, at least. I know all the texts, sir—the whole armour, and the captain of salvation, and the fight of faith, and all about it. Don't waste your words on me—they'll do more good a little further on.'

'No offence, friend, I hope?' said the old clergyman,

with invincible good humour, while his kind heart ached with pity.

'No, sir, none. If you can tell me whether my Lady's boy is hurt, I shall be obliged to you, on the contrary.'

'My Lady's boy is as well and as saucy as possible, as this gentleman can tell you, who rescued him from snowballing.'

The old soldier touched his cap to Randolph, who returned the salute punctiliously.

'Thank you, sir, I am glad to hear it; and you may tell your people, if you please, that if he is ever touched by one of them again, I'll know the reason why, that's all.'

And with that, he turned on his heel, and moved away to his cottage.

'There,' said Dr. Home, 'now you have seen our village bugbear. Rather a singular friend for an exclusive lady to select, eh? And yet I'm very grateful to her, for it is the only hold we have on him. Her beauty has a magic effect in melting his surliness, and I question if any belle, in her gayest London seasons, ever had a higher compliment.'

'What can have made him so surly, do you suppose?'

'Ah! I am afraid it has been some dreadful grief, or disappointment; those visitations must either draw us closer to heaven, or thrust us further from it. We must wait patiently; the good words he knows and scoffs at, may yet come to cheer him before he dies. He gives me the idea of a man who has been religious once, and is continually tormented with the memory of what it was with him in days past, when the secret of God was in his tabernacle. I meet such occasionally,

and their cure is always the hardest of all. It is the old story, hackneyed by frequent quotation—

Nessun maggior dolore,
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria—

Poor old fellow! Here comes Jem Ball himself, the only one of his family that has a grain of sense. Well, Jem! here's a pretty state of things among you—how is your wife?'

'Why, sir, she's but badly, and that's the truth; she has been going on as if she was crazy like, such scolding and crying, and throwing of herself about, and cuffing the youngsters, and rating at me as if I'd done it all; she says she's bewitched, but I don't know what to say to that, so I says nought."

'And very wisely, Jem; I wish all the world had your sense—eh, Maurice? Why, where is that fellow? Oh, there you are! what were you lagging behind about?'

'Only making friends with the sergeant.'

'Nonsense!'

'True, I assure you; I learned the secret from George Borrow. I lifted my hat politely with one hand, and offered him a cigar with the other. The old fellow was won in a minute; I'll be bound he is a judge of such matters, and knows that sort are not to be had every day. At any rate he accepted it with a salute—we did not exchange a syllable, but we shall not be the less friends for that.'

'What do you think of that, Jem?' said Dr. Home, not a little amused.

Jem scratched his head, and looked rather puzzled. 'Well, sir, mappen if more folks tried him with civil

ways instead of rough, he'd be more Christianlike himself, in time.'

'Go thy ways, Jem; thou hast spoken a wise and a true word, and please God, we'll try and act upon it, some of us. May I bring this gentleman in with me? He has done one wonder already—maybe he will be able to work a second.'

'Come in, gentlemen, and welcome,' said honest Jem; 'but if you can manage to bring my good woman to reason, it will be doing a wonder indeed!'

Randolph was somewhat of the same opinion when he entered the stiflingly close room, where, above the din of half-a-dozen voices in eager dispute, that of the patient made itself shrilly audible, overpowering all the rest. Two or three children were huddled together in a corner, with half-dismayed, half-rebellious looks, as if recently driven there by coercive measures; one or two more, already put to bed, but far from having attained the end for which bed was invented, occasionally added their voices from their invisible dormitory; the baby lay lamenting across the knees of an old neighbour, who was urging the necessity of repeating the drop of comfort she had already administered without success; and of course everybody was suggesting something else—Mrs. Ball herself sobbing and crying, arguing with each in turn, with bitter denunciations of vengeance against the author or authors of her wrongs. The entrance of the gentlemen caused a momentary hush, but directly Dr. Home asked a question, the torrent broke out anew. With some difficulty he obtained a hearing, and the first use he made of it was to declare, with marked emphasis, that unless they were quiet, he should just walk home again; which, heartily

seconded by Jem, had the desired effect. Order was established, and the arrangements for the service made with proper reverence, when an unexpected difficulty arose. Two of the intended sponsors were there already, having come in to help—one a good-natured, motherly neighbour, and the other a demure, rosy-cheeked lass, formerly one of the rector's best Sunday scholars; but the godfather, the baby's uncle, was away at the mill at Farnley, and all the rector's assurances that he was not wanted—that the sponsors would be required when the child was received in church, but not before, would not satisfy Mrs. Ball. A christening without the godfather was no christening at all, she said, and she was nearly off again into one of her fits of hysterics, when to the intense excitement of the other sponsors, Mr. Randolph requested leave to fill the vacant office. The parents grew red with pride and satisfaction. Dr. Home, taken quite by surprise, looked earnestly and gravely at his friend, as if to ask whether he had weighed the importance of the charge, but meeting a firm, serious glance in return, made no objection. As soon as all had taken their places, 'I have a word or two first to say to the sponsors,' said he. Attention was instantly excited, and not a little curiosity.

'Mary Steadiman,' turning to the younger godmother, 'I know you are well acquainted with the catechism; would you object to telling us what you mean to promise in the church for this infant?'

Mary Steadiman, blushing violently at the sound of her own voice before the strange gentleman, did as she was requested.

'Thank you, Mary. Now, as you say the child is

to keep God's commandments, will you tell me which are the two greatest?'

Mary thought a moment, and replied as she would have done in the Sunday school; 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart . . . and thy neighbour as thyself.'

'Very good, Mary; then you, and the other sponsors are going to promise that this child will love God and her neighbour?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Very well. Now, my dear friends, I wonder if it ever occurred to any of us in *what way* we love ourselves? I very much doubt if we find it necessary that some kind and charitable person should come and say to us, "There, don't be so hard upon yourself, you did not mean to be so foolish, you meant no harm by that silly word—or you were hasty, and are sorry for it now, and would be glad to mend it if you could; there is no need to tell that unpleasant story against yourself, or repeat that ill-natured remark about yourself, or to tell that circumstance about yourself in that peculiar way that makes you appear so ridiculous, or so unkind, or so unfair; give yourself fair play, and be more chary and tender of your good name." I don't think we require this, do we?'

'No, sir.'

'Still less do we require that it should be said, "Do not bear such ill-will towards yourself; do not keep an old grudge rankling in your heart to make your life bitter; believe in your own better nature; make allowances for temptation, for provocation, for circumstances; throw a veil over that fault; put a charitable construction on that word; bear with that wrong; overlook that

neglect; love yourself too well to be your own enemy." I think we are all quick enough to do that when it comes to the point. People talk of not forgiving themselves sometimes, but it is wonderful how soon they manage it. Oh, my dear friends, but our neighbour—the neighbour we are to love as we do ourselves, to pardon as we do ourselves—to feel for as we do for ourselves—how is it with him? What will become of us if God's law be indeed carried strictly out, and He deal with us hereafter as here we have dealt with *them?*"

Nobody answered; all eyes were bent on the ground. The rector opened his prayerbook, and the service began; but very little of it fell on Randolph's ear. He stood and knelt with the rest mechanically, his thoughts meanwhile wandering on widely different scenes, till he was startled by finding Dr. Home looking him full in the face, with the peremptory command—'Name this child.'

'*Adelaide.*'

My Lady's own name! Whatever would she say? All the assistants, who had left the choice, as a compliment, to the strange godfather, looked at each other in dismay and astonishment. Maurice's sunburnt face glowed with a sudden rush of blood, and he seemed about to recal the word that had so unwittingly escaped; but Dr. Home allowed him no time, and the noble name was given.

'And now,' said the old rector, when the service was over; 'now for our bodily ills.'

It was wonderful how much good the quiet interval had done already; and Mrs. Ball felt almost at a loss how to describe her symptoms, when Mr. Randolph, gravely announcing himself as possessing a certain

amount of medical knowledge, began making professional inquiries. It came out, however, by degrees, that whenever that old man looked at her, or spoke to her, she felt 'all of a crawl, and all of a creep,' and her head seemed on fire like, and she shook so that you might knock her down with a feather; and wouldn't my Lady be mortally affronted at their having made free with her name? This fear seemed so much to aggravate the other symptoms, that Randolph was forced to take the whole responsibility upon himself, and leave them to suppose it had been done as intentionally as it certainly was the reverse.

'As to your neighbour's looks, my good woman, I know what you are afraid of, and I have dealt with these cases before; and for one spell or charm that can be spoken against you or my godchild that is to be, I know half a dozen stronger in your favour. Yes, Dr. Home may shake his head and look amazed at my audacity; I am nearly as much a stranger to him as to you, and as I have been nearly all over the world, I have seen many strange things, and learnt many stranger still. But I must request the most implicit trust and obedience. Give me two tumblers of water.'

He was obeyed in wondering haste, but their wonder was greater still when he took a case from his pocket, full of tiny bottles, containing fluids of different colours, and dropped a drop or two into one tumbler, and another drop or two in the other, and then mixed, and measured, and went through divers mysterious performances, to the breathless admiration of the bystanders; ending in administering a teaspoonful to the patient with great solemnity.

'Now, my good woman, as this is to counteract the

evil influence, I desire you keep yourself as quiet as you can, while you are taking it three times a day. Avoid speaking to Sergeant Wade; if ever you are going to speak to him, or of him, take a teaspoonful of this mixture first, and wait five minutes afterwards. Don't drink any spirits, and keep yourself cheerful; a great deal depends on that. And for Miss Adelaide, I see what she wants; get some warm water ready, in a clean tub.'

This not being a favourite remedy, was easier ordered than done; however, a deeply interested neighbour, volunteering to fetch hers, the bath presently appeared, and Mr. Randolph gravely dropped a drop of something in it, and desired the baby should be bathed very carefully, and take a spoonful of the mixture in the tumblers, and be kept strictly from all 'comforts,' as they destroyed the effect of the mysterious medicine. It was to be kept warm and cheerful, and never be allowed to hear an angry word. Whenever it did, some of the good spell was lost. All this was received with the deepest submission, and profound obedience promised.

Randolph then kissed his goddaughter, shook hands with his fellow sponsors, left on the hard palm of the father a substantial proof of his goodwill, and quitted the cottage, followed by their thanks and praises.

'Well, Doctor,' said he, when they were outside, 'what do you think of me?'

'Lad,' replied the old gentleman, 'I am old-fashioned, perhaps obsolete in my notions; I am not used to these new ways of dealing, and I can tell you, it will not be in a hurry that I shall take you to a christening again. Didst consider a minute what it was thou wast taking on thyself—eh? And then, when it was done,

whether it was right and reverent to follow such an act with all that tomfoolery and hoaxing? Making me too, look like an oaf, staring at your antics!'

'Doctor, you quoted one Italian poet a little while ago; I will remind you of another, who applauds such a proceeding—

> Succhi amari ingannato intanto ei beve
> E dall' inganno suo vita riceve.

Wait awhile and see whether it proves so with my patient. I am not going to enter into philosophical and medical explanations in the cold and the dark.'

'But, Maurice, my good fellow——'

'But, my dear Doctor, I have only one thing to say to decide the matter. I told you it would be better to send me away at once, and I say so still; but if you keep me here, I must follow my own whims and quirks, whatever they may be. The choice is in your hands; I advise you to let me start to-morrow, as I proposed; but if I stay, I have sworn to myself to have my own way in Cannymoor, and be the most popular person in it; and what I have sworn, I will accomplish, or as Sergeant Wade says, I'll know the reason why.'

"Well, well, only stay with me, Maurice, and you shall please yourself; how you are to contrive to get your own way here, I do not exactly see; but that is not my affair, and the folks are kind and civil enough, if you humour them a bit. What is it you are looking at so hard?'

'What light is that?'

'That? It comes from the Manorhouse, I believe; is it not, Stephen?' for Stephen had followed them, unbidden.

'Ay, that be my Lady's room,' said Stephen; 'Betty says she is up half the night a'most.'

'Well, and if she is, does it hinder other folks going to bed?'

'Well, I don't know, sir; but Master Walter told Betty he and his mamma could blow the whole house up any minute, if they chose, and that warn't downright comfortable, you see, sir; and Betty herself seed some awful things in my lady's room, for she told me so.'

'Betty and you are well matched. What might the awful things be?'

'*Skeletons*, sir,' said Stephen, solemnly.

'Skeletons! nonsense—did Betty say she *saw* them?'

'Not quite *saw* them, sir, but there was a bottle of dreadful stuff on the table, that burnt a hole in her gown directly she took the cork out, and Master Walter had got a lot of leaves and flowers out of the churchyard, and he told her hisself his mamma was going to make him some skeletons.'

'Oh!' said Dr. Home, now almost out of patience; 'well, we shall be wiser in time; go to bed, Stephen, and some day we will see if we can explain matters, and disentangle Betty's intellects and your own, which seem in a most deplorable state at present. Good night. Why, Maurice, you look as lost as if you were watching some new planet, that was to light you to fortune and fame, as it did Herschel.'

Randolph started as if the words had stung him, as perhaps they did. He drew his old friend's arm in his own, and they walked on without further remark; the traveller's eye ever and anon turning to steal one more glance at that steady, solitary light.

CHAPTER IV.

One little word, all light and vain,
May break that heart's repose.

BALLAD.

MR. RANDOLPH was not mistaken in thinking he should make a sensation in Cannymoor. For the next few days there was little else talked about than the interesting stranger. Those who could find an excuse for calling at the rectory, called; and those who could not, met the rector accidentally, when he happened to be walking with his friend: and everybody who had been introduced, went to see everybody else who hadn't, to ask if they *had;* and to tell all they had heard, seen, said, or thought anent his past history and future designs. Everything was in his favour. He was ascertained to be rich; the driver who brought him from Shareham said he had no end of trunks left at the George, and threw his money about like a lord: besides, he *had* talked of looking out for a snug little property, on which to settle after his years of vagrancy, and the rector let out his friend had more money than he knew what to do with—more was the pity; and he seemed to have no relations, no claims on his fortune; to have dropped from the clouds, as it were, where nobody but the old Doctor had ever heard of him before; rushing like a true hero of melodrama, just in time to rescue somebody from what *might* have been imminent peril, you

know, if it was not so exactly; nothing could be more interesting.

'And so civil,' said old Mrs. Grayling to her friends. 'As soon as he knew I was treasurer to the reading club, he begged to subscribe his two guineas, as if he was a resident, and to be admitted to the privileges at once; there was nothing he liked better than to have his lighter studies selected by ladies. Those were his identical words; much politer than the rector, who does nothing but find fault and grumble, when one tries and tries one's best to get pretty, entertaining books. I sent him, only the other day, three of the sweetest volumes you ever saw. I don't remember what they were about, exactly; only the heroine marries a charming lord, or goes into a nunnery, or something: Miss Lucy Lyndon ordered it, and she has the sweetest taste.'

'So different from Lady Adelaide!' returned Miss Chatterley, 'who never condescends to like what anybody else does, and who pretends to care for nothing but dry difficult books, that I don't believe she ever gets through, or if she does, she can't understand a quarter of. So mighty grand as she was, pretending to think nothing of her little boy being attacked by the mob—declaring it was only the mischief of a few boys—so unfeeling! I declare, if I were the mother of fifty children, I should be more anxious about them than she is about her one. But as to Mr. Randolph, oh, he is a charming man! Did you hear of his wonderful cures? It is so extraordinary! There were Mrs. Ball and her baby at the point of death, I believe, —one in a raging fever, the other in dreadful fits owing to some terrible fright they had had from

old Wade in one of his paroxysms; and they sent in an agony to Dr. Home in the middle of the night, and he jumped out of bed in a minute, and Mr. Randolph, he was sitting up in his own room, writing (he writes immensely, I understand, and I am sure he means to put us all in a book), and he heard the noise; for poor Stephen was crying ready to break his heart, and nothing would please him but he must go too. And he went, and promised to stand godfather to the baby with Rachel Ford and Mary Steadiman—only conceive how droll! and gave the father I don't know how much money as a christening present, and then he put a drop of something in the mother's mouth, and a drop in the child's, and in five minutes they were both sleeping as sweetly as cherubs, and have been perfectly well ever since. The people are all wild about it, and Mr. Randolph has patients coming to him at all hours of the day, and they all say he does them more good than anybody ever did. I declare the first time I am at all ill—don't stare; I am often very ill indeed, but nobody finds it out—I shall send for him to prescribe for me.'

Mr. Spindler rubbed his hands with that peculiar chuckle that always made Lady Adelaide shrink instinctively. 'I say, Susan, when you *are* ill, it will be of a galloping consumption, I take it: you would never stand anything slower. But don't you think to take in our new neighbour; he is a sharp one, that I can see; he let out a thing or two yesterday about the monied interest of the country that showed me he was none of your old-world sort, but knows the value of having your own purse in your own *pocket*.' He always pronounced this word with exulting emphasis; and as he did so,

the hand rushed at the sixpence, and remained vigorously chasing it for some time.

'Quite a gentleman, my dears,' was Mr. Lyndon's verdict, after his first call made in due form, and with proper aristocratic dignity—'quite a gentleman, and a man of sense, who has seen the world; knows the difference between the position of the landed gentry, and that of a mere buyer and seller of acres and tenements; a shrewd observer, too—evidently amused with the good people about here—understood old Spindler in a moment. I think we may safely encourage his visits here, Penny; we owe it to our friend Home to show due courtesy to his visitor: he loves a rubber dearly, he says, and is keen upon sport; does not pretend to sneer at a day on the moors, though he has bagged strange vermin enough to satisfy Gordon Cumming. He talks of sending for servants and buying horses, if he remains here long. He must drink tea with us, Penny, and the sooner the better. He shall see there is some good society in Cannymoor, besides old Spindler and Susan Chatterley, who follow him about like a couple of beagles.'

Miss Lyndon had no objection; quite the reverse. When Mr. Randolph returned the Squire's call, which happened when she alone was at home, she received him with marked civility, and was as much impressed in his favour as everybody else. His manner had a grace in it rarely seen in Cannymoor, and his expressions of gratitude for the hospitable and friendly way in which the gentry of the place had admitted him to their society—grateful to all, but with an additional emphasis of respect towards the Manorhouse—were exactly what she best loved to hear. Travelling as much as he

had done, he had, of course, seen great variety, but if you asked him what was the happiest style of life, there was nothing, in his opinion, equal to that of the English country gentleman, on his own estate, with his own fair relatives gracing his halls, and enjoying all the dignity of influence with all the freedom of social intercourse. And then he talked of music and gardening, and the last fashions, as he saw them on his way through Paris; admired some quaint old china that was the pride of Miss Lyndon's heart; and departed, leaving her more pleased than she cared in general to express.

Lady Adelaide received the report of the stranger's fascinating manners with much composure. She should be glad to thank him for his good-nature to Walter, but otherwise, this new acquisition was of no more interest to her than the usual run of exciting events in Cannymoor. When, too, she was warned that it was solemnly decreed a high festival to the neighbourhood of tea, music, cards, and supper, should be given in honour of the stranger—an announcement that put the whole parish into a fever of excitement and preparation—her only remark, provoking woman! was, that she should be glad when it was over; and not a single additional stitch, as Miss Chatterley told the public generally, on the best authority, did she condescend to have put into her wardrobe; though everybody had seen her in that old moiré antique, till they could tell every crease in it blindfold.

'It is so odd of her, Mr. Randolph!' for nothing of all this was allowed to escape his ears; 'we used to hear so much about Walter Lyndon and his lady in India, living in the first style, and being looked up to every-

where, his advice taken by the generals, and himself being quite a Rajah, his father used to say, among the natives, we fully expected when his widow came here, she would have shawls upon shawls, and di'monds, and gold chains, and all that, like an Indian princess. It would only have been right and proper, wouldn't it? Well, would you believe it, I don't think she had more than two trunks for herself and the boy, and not a di'mond in either! And as to shawls, Miss Lyndon says there was not one worth the carriage; and yet she never seems to get anything new, never will. To be sure, she is in mourning still, longer than she need be, perhaps—that is all a matter of taste; but there are ways of smartening up black now, that come quite as cheap, and don't prevent your being quite as miserable, if you *must* be miserable. Of course I don't mean to be shocking; it is very dreadful to lose one's husband, we all know that—no, I can't say I do—really, I am such a giddy creature, and you do look *so* satirical, Mr. Randolph, it is high time I ran away.'

And Miss Chatterley *did* run away, to tell the next friend she met how very delightful Mr. Randolph was. As if to lend additional *éclat* to the stranger, the weather changed suddenly; the hedges that had been buried in snow, began to thrust out dark twigs, and feel about for the spring; the north-east wind changed to the west, thaw reigned everywhere, and, as usual, everybody made the remark how much colder it felt than frost. But nature seemed determined to make up for lost time, and out came the sun, and the wind blew warm and encouraging, and as if in preparation for some great event, the snow between them was hustled, and hurried, and melted, and dried up, till a change was perceptible everywhere.

Walter might have walked all over the parish without fear of snowballing; but since his adventure, his grandfather had not allowed him to roam about alone as he had done hitherto, and many battles were waged indoors on this account. The boy felt his courage was impeached: he hated restraint of any kind, and this the more that his aunt Penny seconded Mr. Lyndon in his precautions, and called him rebellious, disobedient, and sinful for his opposition. He wouldn't walk out with grandpapa, he said, to stalk round the grounds, and measure the trees, and hear how all the property ought to be theirs, and wasn't, which he knew by heart; and if it wasn't theirs, what was the good of talking about it? He liked a good scrambling walk, and to run when he pleased and where he pleased; and if he was to be made a girl of, he could tell them it would end in his running away! This awful threat was repeated more than once to his aunt Lucy, because she listened with uplifted hands, and begged him, with tears in her eyes, not to say such a dreadful thing, even in joke: but Miss Penny, happening to overhear him, treated it with mighty contempt; and a hot quarrel ensued, in which he provoked her into the taunt, that 'running away was the fashion in his family.' He was furious—what did she mean, when his papa was as brave an officer as ever lived?—did she dare to say he ever ran away? No, not his papa. Who was it then? Miss Penny evaded the question, and would fain have recalled the words: but it was too late; Adelaide was standing behind her, and had heard them. She quietly stopped Walter's clamour; by proposing to take him a walk; and when he gladly ran off to get ready, closed the door behind him, and turned to her sister-in-law.

'Whatever you have to say of me—of my faults, misfortunes, or mistakes, Penelope, say it at least openly, and to my face, but let that child alone! There is trouble enough in store for him sooner or later, which no care or love may be able to avert. Do not rob him of one safeguard, before you have a better to offer him in exchange; leave him his belief in, his reverence for, his mother! Not *here*, not from *you* should he learn what you were telling him—what you would not have dared to tell, if—'

Her proud lip quivered, the hot tears rushed to her eyes, and she turned away to the window to hide them. Penelope, vexed at having said what she did, and still more vexed at having been overheard, took refuge in extra snappishness. She did not know that she had committed treason, but dear me, people did catch up one's words so now, there was no knowing when one was right or when one was wrong. She was quite sick of it, that she was; and as to telling Walter anything, as Adelaide said, whatever was disagreeable was sure to come out sooner or later, and it was always a thankless office, so she did not covet it. She had worry enough with them all, without that. And away she flounced, hurling the door to after her, and leaving Lucy, in much bodily fear, to soothe her sister-in-law as best she might.

For some minutes there was silence, Lucy not venturing to hazard a remark, but glancing anxiously at the beautiful face, with its noble outline, and dark eyes gazing mournfully far away on the distance; the pride of the stately brow relaxing as thought pressed on thought, till it drooped as if it could bear no more, and she gave a long weary sigh. At this

point Lucy thought it time to begin, and did so, apologetically.

'I am sure, dear, I am very sorry—'

She started, and the involuntary gesture of her head was very like the toss of a fiery charger's mane, when a timid hand touches the bridle.

'Had *you* then a share in the insult, Lucy?'

'Oh dear, no, indeed, my dear Adelaide; I wouldn't have said an unkind thing of you, not if it was true a hundred times over. I always say when Pen talks of it, what is the good of raking up old grievances? and I always shall. Young people will be young, and I am quite sure *I* should have done just as you did.'

Adelaide sighed again; there was nothing very flattering in that reflection.

'What can people expect, you know, if they are so very strict with young folks, but that they will please themselves whenever they can? I was always sure there was every excuse to be made for you, dear, for nobody can be more amiable and obliging, and all that, than you are—when you have your own way, I mean—when nobody contradicts you—you know what I mean. And then, after all, you were *very* young, you know.'

'Yes, I was,' she said, gently (for Lucy's consolations had rather a salutary and humbling tendency), 'and I very soon grew old afterwards. There are times in life when each year does the work of five; but the pulse stops all the sooner. I was young enough to do wrong—old enough never to have forgotten it; and my home, Lucy—when you make *that* an excuse for my disobedience, you little know what a home it once had been!'

'Of course, dear, I did not mean to say you were not happy at home—everybody is—how happy we all are

here! but then, when a young woman marries, you know, she always gives up her home enjoyments; it is her duty. I am sure, Penelope, fond as she is of us all, would sacrifice us all without a murmur, if she was going to be married, because it would be her duty; and not only her duty, it would be a pleasure, of course, a great pleasure, and it ought to be. And then, my dear, I must say, though he was my brother, poor fellow, I always thought poor dear Walter much more to blame than—'

'Stop!' said Adelaide, strongly agitated, and Lucy stopped with a gasp. 'I can bear anything else, but not that. From no living lips will I hear a word of blame thrown *there*. He gave me all he had, his whole loving, confiding heart—to *me*—who caused his hardships, his early death:—to me, so unworthy, but not ungrateful for that deep, passionate devotion. My Walter! my Walter!'

She was weeping now, and quite subdued. Lucy ventured nearer, and brought her ever-ready tears to bear her company. At this moment, Walter's eager voice was heard shouting for his mamma, and she made a hasty effort to recover self-control, and conceal the traces of emotion.

'This will not do,' she said; 'and I hardly know how I came to give way, but sometimes the heart would burst without it. Forgive me if I have been hasty to you, Lucy: I am never so without repenting it afterwards; you are more merciful than the world you live in—you have a look of *his* sometimes, that I would gladly love and trust.'

'My dear Adelaide, how nice to hear you say so!' Lucy embraced her warmly. 'You don't know how very fond we all are of you; and I do really think, if

it wasn't for the whist, and you liked society better, and didn't so much mind people contradicting you, and if you and Penny were not both so very clever and superior, we should be the happiest little party in the whole kingdom !'

Walter's good humour returned directly he was alone with his mother. She was the best companion he ever had, who would walk any distance he liked, never minding heat or cold, or mud, or dust, or cows, or gipsies, or anything! Dust and dirt never seemed to stick on her as on other people; and she was not ashamed of wearing thick boots, and a great tweed cloak that had braved as many breezes as England's flag, and was quite past all apprehension on the score of the weather. In the spring and summer, too, she had always something entertaining to tell him about the wild flowers, and the trees, and the birds—things she told to nobody else, and that nobody else seemed to care about. Nobody had any idea how entertaining his own mamma could be when you had her all to yourself, and aunt Penny was not by. So merrily went Walter by her side that day, looking out with an air of great defiance for his enemies, and going through the whole story of his adventure, and how he fought all the boys, and would fight them over again with pleasure, especially Stephen, he was so ridiculously ignorant! In the middle of all this, he suddenly perceived they were approaching the Balls' cottage. He stopped short, and held his mother back.

'Why, that is Stephen's home, mamma—suppose he is there?'

'Well, you will have to fight for us both, Walter, I suppose, for *I* can't.'

'But, mamma, he is so much bigger than I am.'

'Oh, is he? Then as I doubt knowledge being power in the present instance, it may be as well we do not meet. I am only going to Sergeant Wade's, next door.'

Walter, rather comforted by this, walked stoutly by her side, and they had just reached the old man's gate, when the door of Ball's cottage was flung open by a little girl, her face white with terror, who rushed out, screaming violently. To Lady Adelaide's inquiry she returned no answer, only stared violently, and ran on, roaring more lustily than before.

'Mamma! mamma!' cried Walter, 'there is fire in the room!—look, look, all blazing away!'

Adelaide did look, and gave a start of horror.

'A cradle on fire! Stay where you are, Walter,' and with one bound she was in the cottage, tore off her cloak, and flung it on the flame, that had evidently just caught the curtains of the cradle. For a few seconds her efforts to stifle it were ineffectual; some clothes were in a tub of water near the door, she caught up an armful and heaped them on with one hand, snatching out the infant with the other, who set up a piteous cry. It all passed in a minute, and when Walter ran in, there was only smoke, and choking smell, and Mr. Randolph's godchild safe in his mother's arms.

'Is it hurt, mamma?'

'No, thank God,' she answered, in a voice so tender he was quite surprised, and not particularly pleased.

'You don't love that dirty baby, mamma, do you?'

She only smiled rather sadly, and hushed it by rocking herself to and fro.

'I thought you didn't like poor people, mamma?'

'These people are not poor, my boy.'

'Not poor, in this horrid, poky little house?'

'No Walter—for *their little ones live.*'

The boy looked at her in silent perplexity.

He had a dim recollection of some baby sister he used to hear about, and of a time of trouble in which he was forbidden to mention her; and once, when he saw a tiny curl in his mother's desk, he had been told it was his little angel sister's hair; but this was all, and it was a subject on which he had thought very little. Now it seemed to occur to him of what she was thinking, and his eyes grew very large and full, as he came timidly up to her, and looked wistfully in her face.

'Don't your little ones live too, mamma?'

She stooped quickly, and kissed him, and he felt her tears on his face. 'My great, rough curly locks, do you call yourself a little one? Run and see if any of this poor thing's family are coming to take care of it.'

Walter ran readily, and Adelaide looked down at her charge, which was nearly asleep. The gnawing sorrow of the bereaved mother was keenly at work within her; she had to press her quivering lips together by force to keep down the sobs that could have broken forth—sobs of that wild and bitter repining, that will ask in its rebellion, why this child should have been saved, and that one lost. She forgot where she was—forgot the smells, the want of cleanliness, the smoky atmosphere, that had repelled her so often; her mind was far away, living over again in a moment, what in endurance seemed years—the long trying hours of watching and nursing, and desperate wrestling with Heaven and with

death—the agony of the final overthrow, when the heavens above seemed brass, and the earth beneath seemed iron; the paralysing stupor of hopelessness, when she last turned away from the narrow bed, on which the fierce Eastern sun might burn and blaze, but could never warm the little hand, or flush the wasted cheek again. She saw, felt all this, without ceasing for a second her gentle, mechanical lulling of the child; and how short or how long a time it had lasted she knew not, when she was roused by the stern, rough face of the old soldier in the doorway, watching her with a peculiar expression. The moment she looked his way, his forefinger was up to his forehead. 'Did you save it, my lady?'

'Yes, sergeant, I was just in time.'

'More than they deserve, leaving a helpless bairn like that with only a slip of a lass to see to it; and *you*, my lady, of all people, to be the one to save it. Ay, the Bible folk would say you had heaped fire on their heads by plucking their child out of it; but they'll not thank you, not a bit.'

'I do not wish for thanks, sergeant, only to be relieved from my charge. Will the mother soon be home?'

'Ay—yonder she comes.' And the sergeant, nothing loth, stepped back to meet Mrs. Ball, returning in happy unconsciousness from a comfortable gossip with a neighbour, and bringing Mary Steadiman and her own cousin Betty home to see the baby. At the sight of such a visitor coming out of her garden-gate, she gave a shriek of rage and fear. 'What business have *you* in my house when I'm out of it? What do you want, I say?'

'To tell you, woman, *your* business is at home. Go in and see *why;* what did I warn you of the other night—do you remember?' Without waiting for an answer, he strode past her, and into his own premises.

A moment the dismayed woman paused breathless with dread of what she should see; then in a sort of desperation, burst into her cottage, and found herself in the presence of Lady Adelaide.

What she had expected to find she could not tell, but it certainly was not this; her first impulse was to start back, and her next to spring rudely forward, and snatch her baby out of the lady's arms.

'Give her to me; give her to me this minute!'

'Certainly,' said Lady Adelaide, somewhat taken aback. The woman hugged it passionately, and of course it began to whimper. 'It is a pity you woke it up,' remonstrated Lady Adelaide; 'I had just hushed it off.'

'Much obliged to you, my lady, I'm sure! Nobody axed your ladyship to trouble yourself, but of course it's a great honour to us poor folks, and we ought to be humbly thankful. Maybe some people would say as a *real* lady would stop till she *was* axed, and not come prying and peering into an honest man's house when nobody's at home, and bringing sinful godless old creatures in with her, that no decent body can abide to speak to, let alone live in their houses; but I'm very much obliged to you, my lady, I'm sure, and I'm only sorry you have been and given yourself so much trouble, that's all, my lady! Hush, hush, my lamb, my pretty, she shan't hurt you, she shan't; it's your own mammy, my precious, as has got you now, and nobody

shall get you, not if they was all the lords and ladies in the land, and peered and pryed from morning till night!'

'I am very sorry, Mrs. Ball,' said Lady Adelaide, as soon as she could make herself heard, the quiet politeness of her manner concealing what she really felt, at being so treated; 'very sorry to have intruded in your absence; you may depend on my not trespassing again. Perhaps, when you know the reason—'

'No reason required, my lady, I'm sure! I know very well some ladies, as Betty there knows, think us poor work-people are no better than the dirt under their feet, and that they may make and meddle in their houses with your leave or without it, and it's all an honour—as of course it is, is'nt it, baby? and we're very much obliged to her ladyship, arn't we? and if another time she is good enough to bring in a friend along with her, we'll only take it kindly if it be anybody but Sergeant Wade!'

She turned her back on her visitor as she spoke, flinging and tossing the baby as high as excitement and exasperation could give impetus to her arm; and that important personage, finding going to sleep out of the question for the present, wisely relinquished the idea, and testified lively approbation of this style of nursing. Very wistfully did the dark eyes linger on the little morsel of humanity, held up as if in mockery of that empty place in her heart; very pale was her face when she turned away. The younger women who had come in by this time, made way for her with awe; Betty, not oblivious of certain passages during their acquaintance whereof the issue was not exactly to her own credit, shrank into a corner; Mary

Steadiman, whose sense of propriety was grievously shocked by Mrs. Ball's behaviour, dropped a respectful curtsey, and received a smile in return that made her almost enthusiastic. She had never been so near my lady before, and had certainly no idea how noble and gracious she could look. What could she do to show she felt for her, insulted in that way? Surely she was looking for something; her shawl, no doubt. Mary stepped forward to proffer assistance, but before the visitor could explain, a new light was thrown on the whole matter by the breathless entrance of Stephen and his little sister; Walter being behind them, but only glancing exultingly in at the door.

'The baby! the baby! Who put out the fire? Oh, there's mother! Oh! mother, is it much burnt?'

'Burnt!'

'Ay—so Sally said; she saw the cradle all in a blaze, and run to tell you, but didn't know where you'd got to. To be sure, what a fright she give me! I thought the little 'un would be like a roasted 'tatur by this time.'

'Burnt?' repeated the mother; and as with one impulse, all looked round for the cradle. Sure enough, there it was, upset under a heap of wet clothes, the wicker all charred, and the curtain and part of the sheet reduced to tinder, and a cloak—scorched and singed—evidently used to quench the flame—whose was that?

'Mine, thank you,' said Lady Adelaide, quietly taking it from Stephen's hands.

'*Yours*, my lady?' There was a dead silence; she looked steadily round upon them all with her calm brilliant eyes that were as much above reproach as

conciliation; drew the useful tweed cloak again over her shoulders, and moved to the door.

'Now, Mrs. Ball!' gasped Mary; 'say something to her—say you're sorry—you're obliged—or something! Don't let her go like that, without so much as a civil word, after all!'

But Mrs. Ball seemed for once struck dumb; and Lady Adelaide, whether she heard or not, passed on without turning her head.

It so happened, that Sophy Home, finding it rather difficult to supply her guest with sufficient occupation for his restless energies after he had set the clock going, which never went before, and cut up some dozens of billets of wood, and mended the lock of a door, and the castor of her grandfather's chair; and had written for his own amusement, and read aloud for hers, and yet still looked restless as ever, and unable to sit still—had proposed at last that they should pay a visit to his patients. On the way, he amused himself and her by telling her strange, wild northern stories of Odin and Balder, and Vikings, and Berserkars, on which he declared he meant to write a thick and interesting volume some day. The reverential awe with which this intention was received by his listener was irresistible to a professed traveller; and he poured into her admiring ears the most startling literary schemes—admiring, be it said, in spite of not understanding, nine times out of ten, what they were all about. Her geography was dreadfully taxed to keep pace with his narratives and allusions; for just as she had settled satisfactorily that he was talking of Norway and Iceland, the next minute he was off to Persia and India, and then turned up,

quite unexpectedly, in the heart of England. She ventured at last to ask, what made him run about all over the world in that way? Collecting materials, he told her, for his book, which was to be (in strictest confidence) a complete literary history of the world. Sophy held her breath in awe. Of the whole world? What a book! and how many volumes? Why, that was uncertain; the great difficulty seemed to be in arranging the first, which was to be devoted to the ancient literature of those nations who, by his own showing, had left none behind them; and he proved quite satisfactorily, it seemed, though Sophy could not see it, that this very circumstance of there being *none*, made the field all the richer for the philosopher and historian; and consequently, put his first volume in danger of being very much too large. On a moderate computation, however, he hoped to keep the whole work within reasonable compass, and when complete, Sophy should receive a set, bound in Russia leather, for her own. Sophy thanked him in some alarm; where should she ever find accommodation for, perhaps, six great books in Russia leather? and still worse, how should she ever get through them? At the same time, it was rather flattering to be the confidential repository of a scheme so grand, and she wondered what the ladies' committee at the book club would say to it. 'I suppose, Mr. Randolph,' said she presently, thinking she was making rather a clever remark, 'those nice stories and verses about the Danes and all that, will be in the first volume?'

'My dear little soul, what are you thinking of? they are quite modern—things of yesterday, so to speak. Why, the Scandinavians themselves, like everything European, were but a modern importation. Bless

your innocent heart, we shall have at least ten volumes before we get to the Edda.'

'Oh!' said Sophy, utterly annihilated in her calculations. Then after a pause of great dismay, 'how long will it take you to write one, Mr. Randolph?'

'That depends on many things; but with ordinary perseverance, I reckon on finishing a volume in three years.'

'Three times ten,' thought Sophy, very seriously; 'then it will be thirty before he begins with the sea-kings, and—but he will be an old man long before he has done. It will be very rude and unkind to say so, but I do hope he will not remember his promise of sending them all to me; I never *can* read them, I am sure.'

To her great relief, they now reached Ball's cottage, and the subject changed.

'Now, my dear little friend,' said he, 'I am going to show you something surprising.' He had told her so much of that kind already, that the force of wonder would no further go, and Sophy felt resigned to anything. 'I found a woman in that house in a state of moral fever—almost beside herself from the effects of her own fancy and passion. I cured her in five minutes, and, I believe, for life, without pill, potion, or prescription, such as your doctors would have given her; simply compelling her to exercise a little self-control. This is a wonderful secret in remedying evils; I shall write a volume on the subject some day, and send it to you.'

'Before the "Literary History of the World?" asked Sophy, anxiously.

'No, no; nothing will be done before that—the world claims that as its due; but when duty is per-

formed, one may amuse oneself a little with lighter matters. Now come in, and you will see.'

'Oh dear sir! oh *dear* sir! thank goodness you are come!' was his first greeting, as Mrs. Ball flew to meet him at the door, her eyes swollen and red, and her voice shrill and cracked with eager talking. 'Oh! such a thing has happened, and I don't know what to do, nor what to say, nor what will be the upshot of anything in this world no more, I don't; everything seems to go all nohow, and I'm just that crazy, I am.'

'Then you are just that very wrong,' said Mr. Randolph, slightly disconcerted at this unexpected reception; 'put out your tongue.' She obeyed. 'Keep it out till I tell you to draw it in;' and he took out his watch very gravely, and counted the seconds. 'That will do, don't speak;' and out came his phial-box, and he put a drop into a glass of water, and told her to sip that six times very slowly. All was done in silent submission; her husband, who had risen from the chimney corner as they entered, eyeing the process with a dubious, half-amused air.

'This will *never* do,' said Mr. Randolph, after a deliberate examination of her face, as it cooled gradually down; 'you neglect my positive orders, and then you expect me to cure you. How often did you take your medicine, as I desired, to-day?'

'Oh there, sir, I quite clean forgot it, that's the truth; and so would you, if you'd been skeared as I was, and met Sergeant Wade coming out of your home, and then found my lady in it!'

'Ay,' put in her husband, 'but mappen the gentleman wouldn't have turned her out again, as you did.'

'Now, don't you meddle and make, Jem! It be no affair of *yours*. You don't know nothing about it—you never was a mother, and arn't like to be, so you'd best hold your tongue. A mother feels, and when she feels, she's angry, and when she's angry, she outs with it, and I telled my lady so to her face—I did.'

'And what had my lady done?' asked Sophy, impatiently, 'for I'm sure she would not hurt a fly, if she could help it.'

'Ay, just tell 'em that, mistress,' said Jem.

'Why, that's just what it is, Miss Home—it's just that upsets me so, and there's Jem, he never helps one, only sits there on the settle, and won't stir a foot to get one out of trouble—just like them all—'

'Take care, Mrs. Ball,' interrupted Randolph, 'you will destroy the effect of the medicines if you talk fast.'

'Then I won't, sir, thank you kindly—but,' very deliberately, 'you see, I left our little Sally to mind the baby, and a very good lass she is, generally, but somehow, there's always bad luck in this house now, since we got such a neighbour. I had made a bit of a curtain for the cradle when it was so cold, and Sally says she had been twirling a lighted stick, like brother, and presently the curtain was all in a blaze, and out she run, screaming, to find me.'

'How come you to be out of the way?' inquired Jem.

'Just you mind your own affairs: I had business, and that's enough. Well, sir, it seems my lady was going next door, as she do often, you must know, sir—and I only hope as all's right as goes on there, but he's a awful creature, to be sure, is Sergeant Wade. Well, sir, my lady must have seed the fire, and run in, and throwed her cloak over it; leastways the cloak was all

singed, and there was a hole in her white sleeve, as big as an egg, Miss Home.'

'And so,' said Mr. Randolph, 'this lady saved your baby's life, and when you came in you abused her for it. But of course, when you saw your mistake you apologized.'

'No, sir, that's just where it is—I'm no great talker, that I may say for myself [Jem grunted dubiously], and I was that taken aback, I could not say a word; and my lady, she wouldn't stop to hear what one had to say, but looked very hard at me and the baby with them great shining eyes of hers, that I seemed to feel right through me; and her face turned very white—and out of the house she went, saying nought to nobody.'

'Well, she could scarcely be expected to do less,' said Randolph; 'but what surprises me is, that you should suppose for a moment a lady would come into our cottage with any but a friendly intention.'

'Well, sir, if it had been any other of the ladies—but you see my lady is so high and so distant, she thinks it beneath her to set foot in anybody's house, they tell me: and she looks upon all us poor working people as rubbish and dirt, and can't abide the sight on us: so Betty says—my cousin, you know, Miss Home—and she was housemaid up at the House, and she ought to know. And then that Sergeant Wade is such a wicked old man—and nobody goes near him but my lady, and I've heard some of the ladies say, their own selves, if *they* was her, they should know better than to demean themselves by sitting with an old sinner as never shaved or went to church.'

'This lady seems singularly unpopular among you:

the first thing I saw on my arrival was her little boy being pelted.'

'Ay, sir,' said Jem, coming forward, and speaking in a resolute tone; 'but I'm thinking that won't be again; the Squire spoke to me about it, and the landlord too, and I've promised the lads such a hiding next time as they'll not forget this side Christmas. And as to my lady, I never heard of her doing any harm if she han't done much good, and I don't know why she shouldn't please herself. Mappen they wore big beards in the Ingies, and she likes it for old acquaintance: leastways, she saved the little 'un and wer'n't thanked for it, and she won't pay us a visit again in a hurry.'

'And whose fault is it, pray?' broke in his wife. 'Any man but yourself, that was half a man, would ha' run up to the House, and got a word with the Squire, or one of the ladies, and they'd ha' telled my lady how it was.'

'No, mistress, not I: it's your own scrape, and I'll have nought to do with it. It's the first time anybody were so treated in my house, and I'd be right ashamed to look the Squire in the face, so I should.'

Mrs. Ball's tears began to flow afresh, and she entreated Mr. Randolph to tell her what to do. Would he speak for her to my lady?

'Nay,' said he, 'if she is so proud and distant as you say, she will not allow a stranger to interfere. I have not yet had the honour of an introduction.'

'But you will this evening,' said Sophy, eagerly, 'and I am sure she will be glad to hear it, and it is a great shame that people say such things of her, for she is always very kind to me, and I love her very much indeed. I am sure you would, Mr. Randolph, if you knew her, and what she has gone through, and how

brave and clever she is. Oh yes, Mrs. Ball, it will all be set right; don't be afraid, only cheer up, and let me see the dear little baby—you may trust it in my arms —grandpapa says I am as steady as a little old woman.'

The baby was produced, nursed, and duly admired. Randolph took it in his turn, as it seemed to be expected of him, bent over it, and kissed its little forehead. 'Take more care of that precious charge, my friend,' he said, as he gave it to its mother; 'hers is a singular destiny—God make it a happy one!'

CHAPTER V.

Parlez, n'est ce pas vrai?—depuis ces dix années
Vos doigts frais ont cueilli bien des roses fanées
Bien des pleurs ont noyé votre sein amolli,
Et sous plus d'un éclair ce beau front a pâli.
Oui, vous avez connu la lutte avec les choses—
L'arbre a blanchi le sol de fleurs à peine ecloses,
Et la source, au sortir du rocher paternel,
A gémi bien long-temps sans refléchir le ciel.
Je sais tout; j'ai tout lu dans cet œil doux et tendre—
J'ai tant souffert aussi que je dois vous comprendre.

STE. BEUVE.

THE evening came, and the company; and the drawing-room at the Manorhouse was lighted up, as far as its dark paper and curtains would bear lighting, and the tea was making in the best silver tea-pot, and the silver urn was hissing and steaming, as much as to say there was plenty more where that came from, so you need not spare it; and Mr. Lyndon was in gracious, patronizing mood, as a chieftain receiving the homage of his clan—smiling courteously to the ladies, and when he did lay down the law to the gentlemen, laying it on velvet. Miss Lyndon was brave in crimson satin, and a *coiffure* of gold and silvery tissue. Lucy's hair was full of artificial flowers that looked as if they had been planted a long time ago, and had run wild for want o proper cultivation. The ladies of Cannymoor were all in their best—*i.e.* their most expensive dresses, wherein

colour and variety answered the purpose of taste. More pains than usual had been taken to leave a gorgeous impression on the mind of the stranger, and the result more than answered their expectations. Among other fashions set by the Miss Lyndons, who piqued themselves on various old-world pieces of knowledge, of which distillery was one, was the habit of using powerful scents; a taste that had grown to such a height in Cannymoor, that it seemed to be an object of rivalry among the ladies who should invent or introduce the newest, strongest, most unexpected odour. On the present occasion, everybody's ingenuity had been at work. Mrs. Grayling bore about her ample skirts a strange combination of lavender and apples; Miss Sweetman's was decidedly orange-peel; Miss Lyndon favoured patchouli; while otto of roses, vanille, and musk, in every degree of potency, and more or less mingled with the aroma of an apothecary's counter, seemed to reign everywhere. On the whole, to speak candidly, though a banquet for Peris, and to chemists a field of research, the combined bouquet might be considered rather too powerful to be agreeable, and that Lady Adelaide Lyndon thought so was pretty generally understood. It was one of the many points on which she was at issue with her sisters-in-law and society, and she had early given mortal offence by pronouncing it a vulgar custom. It was no use her pleading that perfumes gave her headache; *that* was set down as affectation and pride. "If we were all dukes and duchesses," Miss Lyndon said, "she would think it the wholesomest and most delicious thing in the world; it is entirely the spirit of contradiction." So to show their opinion of her contumacy, it was rather a point of

discipline with the visitors at the Manorhouse to use rather more than usual.

The guests were all assembled, with the exception of Mr. Spindler and his cousin, and the party from the rectory. When at last they arrived, they all came together, minus Dr. Home, who, after keeping them waiting while attending to one applicant after another, had been obliged to send Sophy (invited to please Walter) under Mr. Randolph's care, and promise to follow when he could. By a singular coincidence they fell in with the other late comers, and it would be too invidious to attempt to describe what sensations were caused by seeing Miss Chatterley enter on the arm of the stranger.

The welcome of the latter was of the most flattering kind. Miss Lyndon advanced with outstretched hands and kind reproaches for unpunctuality; and a general movement of the ladies soon surrounded him with smiling faces, and claims on his gallantry and attention. It was whispered that he appeared a little flurried —not to be wondered at, so distinguished by such a circle—and one of Miss Lyndon's friends ventured to hint to her in confidence, that his agitation had been quite obvious the moment he addressed *her;* whether it was respect or admiration, it was not for her to say, but he evidently could not meet Miss Lyndon with indifference—who could? Miss Lyndon took this compliment good-humouredly, thanking her informant for supposing her goose enough to believe her, and went to her duties at the tea-table in such agreeable spirits, that one really would have supposed she rather liked the idea.

The truth was, Randolph was nervous, more so than

any of his interested observers had the smallest conception of. The room, with its medley of scents, and still greater medley of colour, with its rustle of best gowns, and hum of indefatigable voices, was to him as he entered, like a phantasmagoria—like an uneasy dream, in which everything takes a different form as you look at it, and yet never a complete one—there was a mist before his eyes, and a ringing in his ears, which made all his responses mechanical. He could have raged at himself that it was so; he could have torn the friendly crowd asunder, and dashed out of the room to hide it; but the spell was on his will as on his nerves, and he moved on, as in a waking trance, till he was conscious of a little hush round him, and a little drawing back of the company, announcing that something was going to be done—and Mr. Lyndon, in his most chieftainlike style, was presenting 'my new friend, if I may call him so, Mr. Randolph, to my daughter-in-law, Lady Adelaide Lyndon.' A low bow—a quiet curtsey—a few polite words, he knew not what—and that was over. They had met again.

The business of tea-drinking at Cannymoor was by no means the light matter it is generally supposed to be, with cups of half-cold liquid handed round, accompanied by wafer slices of bread and butter; it was a solemn and a serious thing, to be approached only with an earnest, hearty desire to do your best in getting through the work cut out for you. The endless succession of hot cakes, that 'came and went like the simoom,' let us hope with less unpleasant consequences, would have astonished the traveller, had he not been too much of a traveller to be astonished at anything. With Miss Sweetman on one side, and Miss Chatterley

on the other, his politeness was largely drawn upon, besides the constant calls from other members of the party, who felt defrauded by the two skilful ladies in the appropriation of the public property. The possession of a good complexion, uncertain whity-brown curls, and a pair of light-blue eyes, which, for fear of looking too clever, usually seemed to be just dropping off into a comfortable nap, had long ago established Miss Sweetman in the dignity of the beauty of the party, as Miss Chatterley was admitted to be the wit. Little chance had the former in conversation; but what her rival attempted in rapid skirmishes, she accomplished by slow blockade.

Miss Chatterley.—'Now, Mr. Randolph, I see, by your eye, you are going to say one of your clever, sarcastic things; you men are such observers, and travellers worst of all. I know I am quite afraid of sitting near you, that I am. I am in a dreadful fright that I shall see myself in your next volume of adventures. No, don't say you are not going to write one; people always do who travel—they go on purpose, and I am quite looking forward to reading it. Mind you put us all in; do not leave out anybody. If you want a hint or two, I will help you.'

Randolph.—'With such a promise success is sure; but I must take care of my reputation. Is this a very literary neighbourhood?'

Miss Chatterley.—'Oh dear, yes, I suppose so; is it not, Mrs. Grayling? She is rather deaf, Mr. Randolph, and always particularly so after muffins—Mrs. Grayling! She is secretary and treasurer to the book club, you know, Mr. Randolph, and all the books go to her first, and we all wait till she has done with them,

and anybody who chooses a book, lets her know, and she sends for it, and we don't often get it, but that don't signify—Mrs. Grayling! It was only last month, Mr. Randolph, the drollest mistake happened; Lady Adelaide is by way of being a great astronomer, you know, and she wanted a book for Walter by Chambers or somebody, about the stars, and Mrs. Grayling sent for the Star-Chamber. We were all so glad; for it was much more entertaining, of course, only too much history, which always confuses one, and wastes time. Mrs. Grayling! Thank you, Lady Adelaide, I am sure; she is certainly growing deafer—will you tell her that Mr. Randolph wants to know if this neighbourhood is literary?'

Lady Adelaide, who sat opposite the speaker, between Mrs. Grayling and Mr. Spindler, put the question as required; her face plainly telling the answer in her own mind.

Mrs. Grayling.—'Bless me, my lady—I beg your pardon. Yes, indeed, I am sure, we are a *very* literary set, very; does not your ladyship think so? I have some volumes put up, ready to send to you, Mr. Randolph, to choose from; sweet things, all of them, as the ladies will tell you. They have been the round of the club several times, so you may be sure they are good. You would not suppose it perhaps, Mr. Randolph [in a plaintive voice, expressive of much tried patience], but sometimes it is not so easy to please everybody, though one tries one's best. Some of the ladies like books that make them cry, and some cannot bear them; some hate three volumes, and some are disappointed if there is only one—some read very quickly, and want to change before other people are

ready, and some complain of being hurried, and I want to please them all, and sometimes don't please anybody.'

Here the rest of the subscribers, who each in her individual capacity had contributed her full quota of grumbling, broke forth in a deprecatory chorus of praise and apology. The good old lady shook her head, and seemed but partially convinced.

'Yes, it is very good of you all to say so, but I know I am apt to make mistakes, and Lady Adelaide knows it too, I see, by her smile. Indeed, I was so vexed about your ladyship's book, so seldom as you *do* honour us with an order; but I lost the paper on which it was written, and had to apply to Miss Lucy. But you do not know, Lady Adelaide, how stupid the people are at those booksellers' shops! I wrote most particularly for the last new interesting publications, and what did they do, but send down two great lumbering volumes of the History of England, by some Scotchman or other (not Hume, for I looked to see, but I forget the name), just as if it was for a school, you know. I was really quite put out, though they do say of me that I am tolerably easy in my temper; so I just packed them up again, and wrote rather a sharpish note, that we were not *quite* children, and would trouble them for something that grown-up people could read. I flatter myself I *was* right for once there—but dear me! Your ladyship wanted it, perhaps, for little Walter.'

'For myself, I did,' said Lady Adelaide, resignedly; 'it happened to be the very book I have been wishing to see.'

'No, really; well, I *am* unlucky, and that is the truth. Another time I will keep everything that

comes, even if it is history. But what was it Mr. Randolph wanted to know? Oh, if we were a literary set; yes, I think I may say we are.'

'Certainly,' agreed the party in general.

'Mr. Randolph has had a fair opportunity of judging already,' said Lady Adelaide, with a slight smile, that brought her sister-in-law down upon her in a minute.

'Pray take care, Mr. Randolph, how you take up any hasty impressions. The fact is, it is now customary in the fashionable world to which we poor country-people cannot pretend to belong, always to sneer at everything and everybody *at home*. It looks so well and shows such good taste and kind feeling, that I am quite ashamed we are not better proficients in it.'

There was rather an awkward pause, and as naturally happens when family inuendoes are thrown out in public, everybody looked at everybody else, and tried to appear not to be looking at all. Lady Adelaide made no reply, but the glittering eyes of Maurice Randolph watched the bright colour that stole up into her face; and his heart swelled strangely within him. Miss Sweetman took occasion by the pause to murmur softly, '*You* who have seen so much, Mr. Randolph, must be *very* difficult to please. I fear Cannymoor can have no attractions for you.'

His answer was more energetic than she could have expected, for his glance was still lingering opposite. 'So far from it, Miss Sweetman, that while Cannymoor contains the attractions it does now, I can conceive of no earthly desire beyond it.'

As this compliment might belong to everybody, it was generally applauded. 'Really!' cried Mr. Spindler, with enthusiasm, 'I could drink Mr. Randolph's health

in this excellent tea of Miss Lyndon's for that patriotic speech. Positively, sir, we must make you one of us. You must be naturalized; you must take out your freedom; I tell you what I can show you to-morrow, if you want such a thing—a capital house to let, just the size to suit you, and a servant or two; with stabling for two horses, or more. Fixtures in; soft water, convenient distance from—from everything; south aspect for garden wall—you can grow anything there; quite sheltered from the winds over the moor, snug under the shelter of the Manorhouse—it was formerly part of this property, as Mr. Lyndon can tell you. You couldn't invest money better than by buying it; and it is going just now for a mere song—a shame, in fact, to let it go so cheap; but I am getting old, and I would rather not have things on my hands. I will look into the rectory to-morrow, and you and I can walk over it quietly.'

Mr. Lyndon, who had been on thorns throughout this speech, now stopped in with much dignity. 'You seem pleased with our little village, Mr. Randolph? I do sincerely hope you may find it convenient to remain among us. There is nothing more valuable than good and friendly neighbours [bowing graciously to the company]; and to look upon you as one would indeed gratify my family and myself in the highest degree. I believe, Penelope; I trust, Adelaide, my love, I am not saying too much?' A very smiling bow of acquiescence from Miss Lyndon; a very civil bend of the head from Lady Adelaide.

'We shall always be glad to do our best to make the Manorhouse agreeable to you; such a valuable acquisition is not met with every day, and if our good

friend Spindler can really beguile you into swinging your hammock under my trees, why, we shall all be ready to drink *his* health as well as yours, which we may find opportunity to do by and by. And now, ladies and gentlemen, as it seems no use waiting any longer for Dr. Home, it is nearly time for some of us to think of our rubber. Mrs. Grayling, I know, has been ready the last half hour.'

This hint ended the banquet, and the company was soon broken up into small knots; some of the ladies played by Miss Lyndon's orders; card-tables were set out for different games; Sophy and Walter sat down in a corner to play at draughts, Lady Adelaide standing by to look on and advise both parties. Their eagerness in the mimic strife, their happily unconscious blunders, and delighted astonishment at suggestions of hers, leading to a sweep of three men at once, drew many amused eyes to watch them, and Randolph's among the rest. Mr. Spindler had fastened upon him, pouring into his ears all he had to say on investments, railways, rate of labour and wages, and the *pocket;* and while he seemed to be giving the whole his mute attention, the traveller was able to keep his wistful gaze fixed on the group in the window, and that bending form above all. How often, in the stillness of the desert, of the prairie, amid the hum and shock of cities, or at midnight on the open sea, had that vision risen before him—unlike, and yet the same! What he had last seen, slender, girlish, full of young hope, pride, and fire, in the opening promise of grace and beauty, he now looked upon, as graceful, as proud, as beautiful; but so changed! The bloom was gone, the round cheek was worn and pale, the lips were firmer and haughtier in their curves,

the brow seemed higher and more stately, the eyes had a depth of thought and passion, of power and feeling, that gave them a beauty beyond shape and colour; with strange electric influence repelling one instant what they attracted the next. Was her nature a partaker of this outward development? Her glowing, impassioned, haughty spirit, had it grown softer, milder, humbler, in her womanly experience of vicissitude, bereavement, and care? Or could he read in the very set of the noble features and carriage of the intellectual head, the full growth and ripeness of that pride by which 'angels have fallen ere now?'

One thing was certain, she had forgotten him. He was to her as if he had never been; and though his pride chafed silently as he compared the difference, he could not withdraw his eyes. The long, long thirst of years, the pining that resentment could not overcome, the disappointment, the self-blame, the keen regret, the maddening sense of insult and misconstruction, that had pursued him through his wanderings; the moments when he had felt as if he could bear and forget everything, could he only look upon her face once more, craved now that perilous indulgence, and would not be satisfied; even while every instant it was indulged but added fuel to the smothered fire within.

Dr. Home's hearty voice broke the spell. He came briskly in, as usual, making no apologies; glad no one had waited; he had had some tea, so he need put nobody out; and his cheerful face, as he shook hands right and left, seemed to throw a glow of good humour smothered it turned.

'Ah, Maurice! there you are! I was looking for you. Come here with me.'

And before Randolph could resist, he had marched him up to the very corner on which his eyes had been fixed so intently.

'How are you, Lady Adelaide?' grasping her long, slender fingers in his brown short ones, with a heartiness that left her no time for reserve, had she intended any. 'None the worse for to-day's work, I hope? Ah, I have such a lecture in store for you, but that will keep. Have you thanked my pupil here for his chivalry in behalf of yours?'

Lady Adelaide, too much accustomed to the old gentleman's manners to be disconcerted by them, turned with her usual grace to Randolph, and regretted that her not having had the opportunity earlier, made her thanks appear so much colder than her gratitude. She only wished her imprudent little boy might always find so good a friend at hand in his need.

Maurice Randolph bowed; he could not trust himself at that moment to speak. Her voice, her look, her smile, thrilled to his very soul; he could have knelt and kissed her hand, the hem of her dress, the ground she trod on; have humbled himself body and spirit, in the dust, for her high-born pride to trample on, but to have seen by a glance, by a word, by the faintest change of colour, that she remembered him. But no—he was far from her thoughts just then, and time, and travel, and sunburn, and his dark moustache, had so altered him from the man she once knew, that her eye passed from his face, unconscious and undisturbed, to rest with lingering fondness on the bright head of her boy, bending eagerly over his game.

Dr. Home looked at him too. 'Ay, ay,' said he, nodding his head, 'he will need friends enough, poor

lad, if you and he go on as you have begun; so he had better make as many as he can as fast as possible.'

'He had better learn to do without them,' said Lady Adelaide.

'May I ask why?'

'That he may escape the disappointment of their failure, or their loss.'

'Lady Adelaide speaks,' interposed Randolph, gravely, 'as if her own experience had not been particularly favourable. Yet even the chance of a true and loyal friend not proving quite equal to what one expected, or felt to deserve, would scarcely be a reason for throwing him lightly aside.'

'A true and loyal friend? but they are rare prizes, Mr. Randolph, and such as are seldom met with above once or twice in life.'

'And when met with, Lady Adelaide, are they worth attaching, worth considering, worth feeling for—or only to be kept while useful, and then as worthless flung away?'

She looked at him with a vague sense of uneasiness: something in his voice and manner disturbed her, without her understanding why; but she answered, rather coldly, that any one who so treated a friend deserved to make an enemy.

'True, most true, Lady Adelaide; but how soon an enemy *is* made, who can tell? A word can do it; a single word, that shows him his fidelity is valueless—his regard taken as a matter of course—his claim on reciprocal steadfastness presumption. Friendship requires and implies equality, as no one knows better than your ladyship. No wonder your friends are so few.'

'Now that is all nonsense,' said Dr. Home, uncere-

moniously, without noticing how her countenance had darkened at Randolph's words. 'Lady Adelaide has friends like other people, but she will not acknowledge them. There is Sophy for one, who thinks she can do no wrong; and Colly for another, who says my lady is a born angel; and myself for a third, who prove my friendship by telling her plain truths when necessary; do not I, my dear?'

'No so often as I deserve, sir.'

'If that is spoken sincerely, it does you credit, and I have half a mind to say at once what I want to say. Are you disposed for a plain truth at this moment?'

She coloured a little, but smiled, as she professed herself strong enough to bear anything he could have to say.

'Then, in the first place, I am not at all pleased that the earliest impression a visitor of mine receives on arriving here, should be to the discredit of us all; and *you* the original cause.'

'I, Dr. Home?' replied she, more hurt than she cared to show, 'what have I done?'

'That I leave for you to tell *me*. In the second place, I do not like to hear that when a lady goes into a cottage in my parish, she is supposed to be there as an intruder, and treated accordingly—the fault being her own.'

'I see, Dr. Home,' said Lady Adelaide, struggling not to appear offended, 'you are anxious to show your friend Mr. Randolph how rigidly you maintain your pastoral discipline. I might have been sure the story of my going into Mrs. Ball's house would have been half over the parish by this time; but it is only fair you should know I ran in, as any one else would have done,

to save her child, and certainly had no expectation of being so insolently treated as to prevent my ever troubling her again. If the fault be mine, I am sorry; but as it is only in keeping with the general temper of the people in this place, I fear I must be much more deeply implicated than I was aware of.'

'So you are, my dear,' said Dr. Home. She began to lose patience, especially when Randolph smiled.

'It is mortifying, no doubt,' she said, with a scornful glance round the room, 'to be marked out as the unpopular member of a society, and it appears all are agreed in fixing the stigma on me, so I must bear it as best I may. Happily, it is of very little consequence what such people say or think.'

'Certainly,' said Mr. Randolph, '*such people* are not required to think at all. If there are any who presume to censure Lady Adelaide Lyndon, she has only to pass them without notice.'

'I do not see that at all,' said the uncompromising old rector; 'some of the ladies here are as good, well-meaning souls as ever lived, and do not care how much trouble they take to show a kindness, or what they intend for one. They do good, too, in their way; and the poor know it, and Lady Adelaide has only to try to become as popular as the best of them.'

'I have no ambition to be popular,' said Lady Adelaide, 'and as you set the example of plain speaking, Dr. Home, you will permit me to doubt the amount of good done in that way. Far as I am from depreciating true benevolence, or from remaining insensible to the beauty of Christian charity, I have yet to be convinced that they consist in intruding into poor people's rooms at all hours, and gossiping with them about all that

goes on in the village. If they do, I may well despair, for such a virtue I can never attain.'

Randolph.—'Why should you? Rank and education can have nothing in common with meanness and ignorance.'

Lady Adelaide.—'I did not say so. I should be sorry to think so. Where I could do any real good, I hope I should not hesitate, but—'

Randolph.—'But your sympathy, your friendly feelings, your kind pleasure in their daily progress, those you must reserve for the few that are your equals. Well, this is natural, and not new. I have experienced it more than once. We were observing the other day, Doctor, how many customs, as well as words, may be traced to the East; and certainly we seem to have borrowed one of their leading institutions—that of *caste*.'

Dr. Home.—'Caste, eh! Do you think so? I doubt it. You would be uncommonly puzzled to make a Brahmin of me, with a good beefsteak in my way.'

Randolph.—'Yet you have your mysteries, your craft secrets, no doubt, into which you would be sorry to let the uninitiated penetrate, lest their reverence for the sermon be impaired by hearing how you grumble when writing it.'

Dr. Home.—'Go to, you are a saucy lad. Grumble? and who would not grumble, and lustily too, who had to preach sermons Sunday after Sunday, and see nobody a bit the better for them. Yes, my dear Lady Adelaide, you shake your head as if you were surprised at my saying so here; but, my dear, you are just as bad as the rest, so do not look as if I only meant other people.'

Lady Adelaide.—'Only as bad as the rest? that is

some encouragement, for I understood I was a great deal worse. But I am not quite clear what Mr. Randolph means.'

Randolph (after a pause).—'The truth is, all classes are ambitious. The friendship of their own circle is not enough for them; they must have a hold on the one immediately beyond; the poor man does not only look for Christmas doles and subscription bounties—he wants a shake of the hand, and a smile of good-will, or he feels defrauded of the best part of the gift. The educated ranks share the same desire, but there it is harder to gratify. Those raised higher than their fellows shrink from the possibility of their ever being on a level. They will show them a kindness, do them a favour, protect, support, be courteous to them, so long as they keep within the magic boundary that society traces out; but attempt to pass that line—look for sympathy, for communion, for the equality between man and man, without which no real depth of feeling can be maintained in minds of equal power—and all is over at once between you, and the world says it serves you right. Is not this an European form of caste, rivalling the old laws of Brahmin and Pariah?'

Dr. Home.—'You must answer this, Lady Adelaide, as you know more about it than I do. Is this the case? or is it only a traveller's story?'

Lady Adelaide.—'I own I should have expected more liberality, more real knowledge of the world, from a traveller and a man of literature. It may be the popular side of the question, but scarcely the true one.'

Randolph.—'You think not, Lady Adelaide?'

Lady Adelaide.—'Certainly. I deny that real merit

is less appreciated by one educated class than by another.'

Randolph.—'Yet the experience of hundreds would tell you a different tale.'

Lady Adelaide.—'The experience of *one* would be sufficient; only spare me the hackneyed, overdrawn pictures of the popular writers of the age, who seem to have taken up one unhappy specimen as a type, and argue from his singular and peculiar deformities on the formation and habits of the whole species.'

Randolph.—'I will keep to known facts. You think I am prejudiced, but the prejudice was bred in my family from the fate of one of its most beloved members, handed down to us in old letters and recollections. His was such a case as Tennyson loads with such withering sarcasm—as Crabbe's iron pen has graven on the rock for ever. A youth of talent and promise, a noble patron, a haughty beauty, who yet deigned to encourage his timid admiration, and admit him to the intimacies of social intercourse, allowing him to believe himself her equal and friend—form the outlines of his story as we trace it first. The end is one that Lady Adelaide's gentle experience will discredit. She judges by her own benevolent nature, that would scorn to raise so high merely to fling so low. But such was his doom —a dazzling daydream—a midnight awakening, where there was darkness and gnashing of teeth. Lured on to hope against hope, his reason slept, his honour was silenced; and the wild confession was wrung from his soul as he flung himself helplessly on her mercy. What mercy did he receive? That bitterest of punishments for too credulous faith, which no man deserving the

[illegible] can forgive—a scornful, contemptuous laugh, pitying his delusion, and advising him to be content with his own station and his equals. So they parted. That lady lived long, married, brought up children, died respected among friends and relations, whose reverent admiration inscribed on her monument, that she had never failed in a single duty incumbent on her exalted station.'

Dr. Home.—'And the poor soft lad—'

Randolph.—'He shot himself.'

Dr. Home.—'Ugh! worse and worse. I fear he was one of those idolaters whom Scripture calls fools.'

Randolph (in a low emphatic tone).—'Yes, it was a fool's part he played. He should have lived—I would have done so in his place—lived, and worked, and risen in the world in defiance of everything; and then, when I, too, had wealth, and power, and influence, I would have sought her out, and stood in her path, wherever it led, and tried whose pride would be humbled soonest—hers or mine!'

He looked full in Lady Adelaide's face as he spoke; their eyes met fixedly; a stern smile was on his lips, and every feature glowed with the deep passion curbed so long. On hers the effect was electrical; all the undefined associations his voice and appearance had been calling up that evening, suddenly took distinctness and coherency; and he read in one glance that he was recognised. Her start, the paleness of her first surprise, the deep-dyed blush of the second recollection, the involuntary impulse to spring forward and greet him by name, checked as suddenly by the dark hostility of his look—all passed in a moment, but not one unmarked by him, to whom it seemed as if the first drop of the cup

his evil angel had so often held up before him, was cooling the fierce thirst of his soul.

If the discovery itself took Lady Adelaide by surprise, his manner evidently confounded her. The calm pride of her bearing was borne down by the audacity of his; the weaker nature, spirited as it was, quailed before the stronger, though scarcely the braver; her face grew very pale, her eyes, which seemed unable to withdraw from the spell of his, gradually softened into an expression of sorrowful reproach, and her lips parted, but uttered no sound. At that moment, before Dr. Home, whom Randolph's last speech had struck painfully, could interpose the rebuke he intended on its false principle, Miss Penelope stepped lightly up to the party.

'I am sorry to interrupt all this pleasant conversation, but my father cannot make up his rubber without one of us, and as I cannot be spared, my dear, perhaps you will not mind sitting down for a little while, till I come and relieve you? He has secured Mrs. Grayling and Mr. Spindler, so you will be a first-rate quartette. Do you hear me, Adelaide, my dear?'

Her voice dispelled the dream in which her sister-in-law was lost. She turned in a startled, nervous manner that made Miss Lyndon ask, laughing, 'If Mr. Randolph had been terrifying her with any of his amazing stories?'

'Mr. Randolph has certainly surprised me very much,' replied Lady Adelaide, in a voice studiously calm and measured, 'more so than I could have believed possible.'

Randolph bowed low. 'I may yet have the honour of proving to your ladyship that many things are possible in which you have never believed.'

She looked at him for a moment with her haughty

head flung back, and her eyes glowing; then turned away in silence. Some of the party joining them, now absorbed the attention of the rector, and Randolph was drawn by his fair hostess to a seat near the piano, where they could converse under cover of the music. Her eyes followed the wandering glance of his. 'Yes, that is a singular taste for a person still comparatively young, is it not? But Lady Adelaide must be passionately fond of cards: I have known her sit and play écarté with my father, hour after hour, on occasions like the present, sooner than join in our conversation and music. I dare say you thought me very selfish to propose she should play, but it would have been a great offence if I had not. The worst of it is, she is sure to lose her temper, and that puts my father out sadly.'

'Lady Adelaide ought to be a good whist player,' said Randolph, 'if she inherits General Conway's skill with his fortune.'

'His fortune! She inherited very little of *that*, I assure you: it is little enough we are the better for the wealth of her family. Do you know them at all?'

'I had the honour of some acquaintance with them, some years ago—before Lady Adelaide's marriage.'

'Ah, indeed! Do you think her at all altered since then?'

'Very much.'

'I suppose she really *was* very handsome in her youth?'

'She was considered so.'

'Well, I can easily believe it: indeed, there are still some remains of good looks when she is pleased, which is not so often as, I am sure, I do my best that it

should be. Poor thing! she has had trials, you know, and we remember that, and bear with her.'

'Does Lady Delaunay often visit these parts?'

'Lady Delaunay! no, indeed.' Miss Penelope coughed, looked mysterious, and as if she wished it to be understood she could tell a great deal if she chose, but nothing should make her choose, if it was ever so. Randolph looked at her eagerly.

'I am indiscreet, perhaps, Miss Lyndon; but from the little I formerly knew of Lady Delaunay, I conjecture enough to make me more curious than I have a right to be.'

'Well, Mr. Randolph, it is only natural, and if you do not hear it from me, you are sure to do so from other quarters—though we do not talk about it, you know: what good would it do? But the real truth is, her family have never forgiven the marriage. It is too long a story to tell, if it were fair to tell it. She was very young, which is a great excuse; but the world, you know—Mr. Randolph, the world is always rather uncharitable towards a young lady who marries without anybody's leave but her own.'

'Was that the case?' asked he, with a flushed cheek.

'Why, yes—there is no denying the fact, whatever allowances one may wish to make. She was, as I said before, very young, and my poor brother was extremely good-looking, and—well, perhaps I should not say so—but Adelaide certainly must have shown him attentions that no young officer could withstand, you know; in short, marry him she would, and all the world could not prevent her; and when I think of what it cost him, it is difficult for one *always* to forgive her, Mr. Randolph.'

'Very difficult,' said Randolph.

'Yes; his prospects were excellent: our family interest—my father's name—in short, there was everything in his favour; but owing to this unfortunate attachment, her family persecuted him, and had his regiment ordered to India, thinking to put a stop to it altogether; upon which, they got privately married, and she went to India with him, and her mother and brother have never been friends with her since.'

'And was she happy?' asked Randolph, abruptly; then recollecting himself, 'I beg your pardon: your goodness makes me presume.'

'Not at all, Mr. Randolph, not at all. Happy? yes, I suppose they were; but it was not likely she should understand managing an income, and of course her ideas were extravagant. I do not blame her, poor thing! but somehow or other, the best part of her fortune was spent; and when my poor brother died, she and her boy had no resource but to come here: they have no other home—quite dependent upon us, and a great charge it is, I assure you. Not that I grudge it to them; far from it; but one would like to see a little appreciation, a little deference, a little acknowledgment of all one does: one cannot help wishing *that*, though I put up with a vast deal more than I ought, for poor dear Walter's sake, and the love of peace and quietness.'

'She must have gone through a great deal,' said Randolph, whose eyes had wandered again to the card-table, and lingered on the form, whose noble profile was turned towards him, with its quiet look of weariness, and delicate worn cheek, on which the long dark lashes rested—'a great deal of hardship and exertion, as well as sorrow.'

'Of course she has: my brother was one of the most promising officers in the service, and he got a command through a friend of hers, and she went everywhere with him, and what she saw and did nobody knows, for she will not tell one anything; and the servant she brought over, whom you have heard us talk of, was too fond of rodomontading to be believed. I always told her she humoured that fellow too much; I could not like him myself, though I may have been wrong. However, everybody was very sorry for her, and all that; and at first it was very natural and right that she should have little taste for society, and no spirits to be agreeable; but when it comes to the third year, I do think it is time to have some regard for other people's comfort. If it is all love for my brother, I suppose I ought not to grumble: I loved him myself, Mr. Randolph' (the tears stood in her eyes as she spoke), 'that I did: but I was decently civil to my friends all the same; so I must be allowed to have my doubts about its being all sorrow for *him*.'

'Lady Adelaide's spirits, perhaps, have never recovered the shock of the bereavement.'

'No, I suppose not: that is the polite and genteel way of putting it. Fashionable ladies are only low-spirited—never cross. In anybody else it might be called by a stronger name; but those who think themselves so very superior to everybody else, that it is a condescension to sit in the same room with them, ought not to be under obligations to them—ought they, Mr. Randolph? However, we all make allowances for her: she really has some very good points about her when you come to know her, and we only smile at her little infirmities of temper, and excuse them as best we can to

our friends. Only we cannot make her popular, you know, Mr. Randolph.'

Randolph assented silently, and Miss Sweetman's song, to which they had never thought of listening, being now ended, it was necessary to be very grateful to her for singing it. As she modestly and blushingly retired, her place was filled by a young gentleman, whom Randolph had already remarked as wearing very long hair, painfully brushed off his temples, and hanging over his neckcloth; and as having a peculiarly dreamy pair of eyes, that had made him set him down as, in all probability, the village poet. In this he was mistaken; would nature but have allowed to Mr. Ousel the mechanical skill of rhyming, it would have saved him and others a world of trouble, and relieved him of a load of pent-up emotion. As it was, his genius took a different turn, and he had for some time assumed the musical dictatorship of Cannymoor, where he was looked upon as a second Mendelssohn, at least. He rather affected the graces which fame and novel writers have ascribed to that composer; piqued himself on doing nothing that he could not do well; was proud of his white hands, and high forehead, and the refinement of his habits; and from time to time, produced a series of melancholy pieces of music, bearing the name of 'Silent Shadows' (rather a vague one, since shadows are not usually remarkable for loquacity), which were circulated in MS. as a great favour among the ladies of Cannymoor, and pronounced fully equal to the 'Lieder ohne Worte.' The peculiarity of these 'Silent Shadows,' wherein lay their great charm, was that, as they scorned the vulgar appliances of tune, melody, and so forth, they were capable of being made to bear any meaning the audience

or the performer liked best; and if you only forbore to read the titles of the numbers, it made very little difference whether you heard 'The Dream,' 'The Waking,' 'The First Hope,' or 'The Last Despair.' He had made a desperate effort at one time to reform the Cannymoor church music, and displace what he called 'the common-place vulgarity of the old psalm and hymn tunes,' by a style of chanting of his own devising; but the village choir were too stubborn and too deep-chested for him, and it required all the blunt sense and good humour of Dr. Home to keep the peace between the rival schools of harmony. As it was, the choir sang louder, slower, and with longer-drawn cadences than usual, when Mr. Ousel was at church; while Mr. Ousel, with his arms folded, and his long hair falling over his shoulders, gave the world to understand, that if he compromised his principles by enduring 'Mount Ephraim,' 'Hanover,' and 'Cambridge New,' it was entirely under protest, and out of respect to the clergyman.

The 'Silent Shadows' were for some time a puzzle to his admirers, and many wild conjectures were hazarded as to their object and meaning; but of late the secret had been divined, and it was now pretty freely circulated, in confidential whispers, that they formed an autobiography of a hopeless passion for Lady Adelaide. Hopeless it might well appear to be, considering the intense fear and awe he had of her presence, and the disheartening manner in which his existence was generally ignored; but not the least interesting on that account —nor, to do him justice, the less sincere. *Au reste,* this gentleman was harmless enough—in great request at Cannymoor, where gentlemen were scarce; and having

a naturally good voice and facility of execution, had never discovered how he spoiled the one and wasted the other by the bad taste that, more or less, invariably accompanies conceit.

On the present occasion, unconsciously stimulated by Randolph's vicinity—the rival who had stood ever since he came, between him and the sun—Mr. Ousel put forth his powers; and after humouring the ladies with a favourite ballad, on which he disdained praise, opened a music-book with his grandest air, darted one glance at the whist-table, as if in the faint hope of being listened to there, and plunged most unexpectedly into Beethoven's celebrated song, '*Adelaide.*'

To some of the company this was so new, that in their innocence, they thought he had composed it for the occasion, and their only doubt was whether it was not going a little too far. It was soon evident that he was in an inspired mood, for the original text was by no means sufficient to relieve his emotions; his body rocked to and fro as if waved by the wind; his head was one minute down upon the keys, the next jerked violently back to the terror of the beholders; while his restless feet, first on one pedal, then on another, then on both, almost resembled the action of a velocipede. All this Randolph could have borne quietly, for it was only an additional sketch in the group; but the song itself, one of his oldest favourites, was rather more than even his travelled patience could stand. Whenever the name recurred, as it does so often, Mr. Ousel found a new expression to throw into it—embodying as it were each of the Silent Shadows in turn, after the fashion set by the 'Ode to the Passions,'

according to the version of the inimitable John Parry :—

When Music, heav'nly maid, was young,
'Twas wonderful how well she sung!

Fear blundering over the chords, Anger tearing at the lyre; Despair's woful measures; dejected Pity, and Melancholy with eyes upraised, called in turn on 'A-del-a-i-de,' and all, as it seemed, to no purpose. Once only did she turn her head, and Randolph thought she looked at him. Did she then remember, as he did, the old days connected with that song? Did it strike her, too, in hearing it so marred in the delivery, what an analogy there was between the 'sweet notes jangled,' and the associations once blended with them—now too, 'out of tune and harsh?'

He rose and moved to the card-table; Miss Penelope, who had been listening rather disparagingly to the song, which she pronounced freely to be a parcel of stuff, followed to see what was going on. Things looked serious with her family fortunes at that moment; Mr. Spindler, who joked, and laughed, and played very fast, and saw through Lady Adelaide's hand, as if it was glass—and Mrs. Grayling, slow, methodical, almost apologizing for taking her ladyship's king, and, however she might let slip such a trifle as the name of a scientific treatise, never forgetting a card that had been played —were more than a match for Mr. Lyndon and his daughter-in-law; and showed no more respect for Conway tradition, than Napoleon's soldiers did for the tactics of le grand Frédéric. In plain English, the Manorhouse was being most disgracefully beaten, and its lord's face, when he looked at his partner, was pleasant to behold. In justice to him, it must be confessed,

she had been playing very badly, and, worse still, did not seem to have found it out.

'It is a great mistake, Penelope, asking people to sing when whist is going on,' said he, as his daughter came up; 'it distracts your sister so, she can hardly play for listening.'

'And it is a doleful sort of ditty, too,' said Mr. Spindler; 'very fine, I dare say, but not quite to my taste. I like something more of a jig for my money; but it is treason to say so to Ousel. Cut, if you please, my Lady. Now, Mr. Randolph, will you bet a sovereign on Lady Adelaide's lucky star? It is just in the ascendant.'

'I should have imagined the reverse,' said Randolph, with a smile, 'if appearances are to be believed. However, on Lady Adelaide's skill, with all my heart, if not on her star.'

But Mr. Lyndon, to whom some promising cards had just been dealt, protested pleasantly against betting, both as derogating from the dignity of whist, and also robbing his good friend Spindler of what he could very ill afford; and forthwith began his lead in hopeful spirits. But if his partner's star was in the ascendant, it must have been sad uphill work with that luminary, for everything went wrong; Randolph saw her once or twice put her hand to her head as if from a shoot of pain, but Mr. Lyndon only observed her play, and of that, the less we say the better. He could not give full vent before his guests, but when all was over, and his triumphant adversaries were reckoning up their points, he turned to Randolph, with bland politeness, congratulating him on having taken his advice.

'You were very nearly backing the wrong side, sir;

I never saw anything like that—never! Upon my honour, I could not have believed it, if I had not seen it with my own eyes. How was I to suppose you had the queen of trumps in your hand after what you played before, my dear Adelaide? the game was absolutely ours! we could hardly help winning it. Not that I care twopence about it, myself; only if one does a thing at all—hang that music, there is no hearing oneself speak—it is worth while to do it well. What *could* you have been thinking of, my dear?'

The question was easier to ask than to answer. Lady Adelaide did not attempt to answer it, but seeing plainly how much he was vexed, was beginning to offer an apology for inattention, when Mr. Spindler, with a preparatory chuckle, interrupted her by saying, 'Mr. Lyndon ought to have known my Lady Adelaide would *play the queen*, for she *always does*.'

Penelope looked at Randolph, and smiled; his lip curled slightly; Lady Adelaide saw it, and rose from her seat, flushing crimson.

'You will excuse my playing any more, sir; the heat of the room, and these strong perfumes,' with a resentful glance at Mrs. Grayling's ample pocket-handkerchief, 'are more than sufficient reason for anybody's want of skill. It is really almost insupportable.'

'There, there! my dear creature,' cried Miss Penelope, 'say no more—nobody wants you to go on playing. It *is* difficult to lose with good humour, we all know. Give me your place, and do just show Mr. Randolph that Indian chess problem that puzzled us all so much; I feel convinced nothing is too puzzling for him.'

Her sister-in-law made no reply, but moved slowly away, followed after a moment's hesitation by Randolph,

to the recess where the chess-table had been set out ready for action. She seated herself beside it, *en reine*, with an air of resolute haughtiness that seemed prepared to resist to the utmost. He stood between her and the company—his arms resting on the back of a chair—his eyes fixed on her face.

'Before I attempt to offer you a problem, sir,' she said, after a short silence, in which, unconsciously to themselves, all the pride of their natures had time to rise to the surface, and welled even to their lips, 'I must ask for the solution of yours. Unravel the mystery of this strange behaviour; a proceeding so unlike the Mr. Gray I once knew, as almost to make me doubt the evidence of my own senses.'

'Madam,' he replied, gravely and slowly, 'the man you knew is dead. I am but his heir and executor.'

'May I request you, sir,' she said, impatiently, 'to be less metaphorical? I do not profess your acknowledged skill in deciphering riddles. Answer me plainly; for what reason have you appeared here under another name, and why have you made a mystery of our previous acquaintance, and allowed yourself to be presented to me as a stranger?'

'Plainly then, madam, in the first place, I believe it is by no means uncommon to change a name on inheriting the fortune annexed to it; and in the second, there was nothing in the close of my acquaintance with Lady Adelaide Chester, to warrant my supposing I could be looked upon as more than a stranger by Lady Adelaide Lyndon.'

She bent her proud head slightly, as if accepting the explanation, and the relative position implied in it.

'I was not aware of your good fortune, Mr. Randolph;

I beg your pardon, and congratulate you sincerely. When I heard of you last, you were applying for a government situation. Did you succeed in your diplomatic schemes?'

'No, Lady Adelaide, I gave them up on the very verge of fulfilment. I was disgusted with my native country, and this competence put the world before me, too temptingly to resist. Perhaps I was wrong, for having just learnt to disbelieve in truth, in honour, in nobility of character, wherever they looked most attractive, I was cast precisely in the mould in which statesmen are supposed to be made.'

'Ah, indeed! a second Childe Harold—rather out of date, Mr. Randolph, but not the less likely to be appreciated at Cannymoor. Never was a place better fitted to encourage your disbelief in truth, at any rate.'

'I hope so, indeed, Lady Adelaide, after what I have heard.'

She pressed her hand on her bosom; her breathing felt oppressed, and her heart fluttered painfully. The close, scented atmosphere felt like a cord round her brain.

'And what can you have heard already,' she asked, after a pause, 'that you wish so earnestly may be untrue?'

He too paused, as if this were hard to answer.

'After being away from England so long,' he said, presently, 'a man has to make up his mind to see many changes. It is only reasonable to expect them, yet no one does—I did not—and how many I have seen! There was a fine elm that had sheltered generation after generation, and looked as if it would flourish for ages yet—I found its stump only; it had decayed and fallen, and been sold—cut up, perhaps, into coffins. There

was a baronial hall, whose owners dated from the Conquest; whose grey turrets had been my admiration from childhood; it had been sold, pulled down—the railway ran through the park—the materials of the building had helped to erect a parish union. There was a trout stream where I had spent many a happy morning, such as Davy might have envied—it was turned—stagnated—become a mere ditch, unsightly and unwholesome. And yet there are changes more strikingly painful than even those of the tree, the hall, and the stream; can I help wishing they were not true?'

She leaned back in her arm-chair, for a faint sickness was stealing over her more and more, though she still maintained an appearance of haughty composure.

'Time will not stand still for us, Mr. Randolph, and it is not every one who is fortunate enough, like yourself, only to make changes for the better. You hold the golden key; and halls, elm-trees, and trout-fishing are all to be had for the buying. My only surprise is that, with so much to choose from, you should have come *here*.'

'I might be surprised too, Lady Adelaide, if others, more distinguished, with far wider means of choice, had not done so before me.'

Her whitening lips quivered with the half-audible word, '*Insolent!*'

He seemed not to hear, and went on as if thinking aloud—

'Yes, there *is* a change; more painful to look upon, even where it is merited, than any destroyed association of nature or of home. It is where we see one, whom we remember, oh! how vividly! beloved, admired,

honoured—on whom the very airs of heaven seemed to breathe reverently, as if fearful to injure so fair a thing—become the object of sarcastic compassion, the topic of petty gossip, with fine talents unemployed or wasted—with every recollection that should have ennobled a career, only rendering it the more humiliating. To look back to a point in life when all that fair promise might have been realized, and then to turn from what it might have been to what it is—oh! there is no change like *this*—and it has been mine to see it!'

'What is the matter?' cried Mr. Lyndon. A sudden gust of air swept through the room, flaring the candles and blowing away the cards. 'What are you all about? What has happened?'

A dozen voices answered at once, going on in different keys, 'It is Lady Adelaide—she is taken ill, overcome, fainting—no, only oppressed by the heat—she is better now, don't all crowd round her [everybody doing so all the time]—water! sal-volatile! smelling salts! Has nobody a vinaigrette? Here is a delicious scent—*Eau de choufleur;* no, she hates that; *bouquet éternel*—why, don't you remember how scornfully she put it from her the other day? Throw water in her face; raise her head; no, no, lay her flat on the floor; take care, Mr. Ousel, you will give her cold with so much water; beat her hands, will you? A fan! has nobody a fan? Thank you, Mrs. Grayling; that is a good large one; smells delightfully, too; what is it made of? Dear, dear, it seems to make her worse; what is to be done? Mr. Randolph, can you suggest nothing?'

Before he could reply, Lady Adelaide opened her languid eyes, raised herself in her arm-chair, and shiver-

ing from head to foot, begged them not to trouble themselves, for she was much better. It was high time she was, poor woman; for the kind-hearted ladies, who had forgiven her all her misdeeds directly they saw her suffering, were each bent on restoring her in her own way; and every scent-bottle she detested most was being offered to her nose, or sprinkling on her hands, or being poured on large pocket-handkerchiefs to lay on the top of her head; while Mr. Ousel, armed with a jug of water, stood poising it in his hand like a quoit, ready to launch the contents over her on the slightest provocation. She sank back in her chair, faintly imploring, 'Let me alone; only let me alone;' but that was a little too much to expect from human nature.

'Poor dear! she is subject to these fits, is she not? Nervous; a little over excited to-day, no wonder; did you hear what she did? rushed into a blazing house, and dragged out three children . . . no, no, I assure you there were but two, and she jumped with them out of window;—was that it? Dear! no wonder she is shaken, and she is one of those who will never own to being ill, never; and it is as much as your life is worth to ask how she feels. Who *is* gone for sal-volatile? Oh, Miss Lucy has got something; that's right. Do drink it, dearest Lady Adelaide! it will do you so much good.'

Lady Adelaide, in helpless despair, took what was offered her; it was something excessively nauseous—she could not conceive what: in fact it was a home-distilled compound on which Miss Lucy specially prided herself, which might have rivalled the celebrated morning draught Dr. Luke Lundin gave Roland Græme. It had its effect, however, for the very revulsion of feeling

helped to recover her scattered senses; though trembling still, she was able to rise, and attempt to make her way through her too attentive friends. They crowded round her directly she moved. 'Take my arm, dear Lady Adelaide; no, no, let Mr. Randolph support her, he is so strong. Suppose she were to fall? What—your ladyship would rather not? there—you shall do as you like, poor dear. She is much better, Miss Lyndon [as Penelope, whom Lucy had forestalled, came up with a remedy] very much better, thanks to dear Miss Lucy's cordial; are you not, dear?'

Such affectionate language had never been employed to her before, nor was it intended for her in the abstract, but simply in her temporary character of invalid, which has this privilege among others. She endured it all passively, returned faint thanks with the grace that never forsook her, and still moved to the door, which seemed unusually far off. 'How glad I am I thought of my tincture!' cried Lucy, in the flush of success; 'is it not excellent, my dear Adelaide?'

'Only not strong enough, Lucy.'

'Oh, my love, in what way do you mean?'

'I mean that a very little more would have poisoned me quite, and saved further trouble.'

Lucy fell back annihilated. Dr. Home drew Lady Adelaide's arm in his without waiting for permission. 'After that, it is time for the church to interfere. Don't look so scared all of you; she only wants quiet and air; let her rest in the hall a few minutes, and then she can come back, or go to bed, just as she pleases. Stay where you are, everybody; *I'll* take care of her.'

CHAPTER VI.

I see you what you are: you are too proud.
SHAKESPEARE.

THE cold of the hall and the relief of stillness, aided by the exertions of a powerful will, soon revived Lady Adelaide; and sorely humiliated did she appear at having been the cause of so much disturbance. She pleaded the closeness of the room, the scent, fatigue, and other sound reasons, to which her companion listened with a nod of acquiescence, studying her face intently meanwhile. Accustomed for so many years to read hearts, what he had noticed that evening—and very little passed that he did not notice—had moved his compassion strongly. He yearned to give her comfort.

'I know what would do you good, my dear,' said he at last.

'No, do not propose any more remedies,' said poor Lady Adelaide.

'Well, well, our good ladies in there were a little over busy, perhaps. They mean kindly, but there is no teaching them when to stop. Mine, however, is a very old-fashioned prescription, and very simple.'

He took a turn up and down the hall, and came back to where she was seated.

'There was a child once subject to a dreadful disease

—foaming at the mouth and pining away—that nothing, it was supposed, could eradicate. He was brought at last to a Physician, who showed that the only thing required was this simple remedy, which, when applied, made him well.'

'And that was—?'

'Wait a minute. There was another, burnt up with fever, at the gate of death: all hope extinguished; *this* was applied, and he recovered at once.'

'Why these are wonders, Dr. Home. You are not in earnest?'

'Yes, I am, my dear. There was a woman nobody could restore to health, whom it *did* restore; there was a man to whom it gave sight; there was a young girl whom it raised from the dead. It *can* do wonders, indeed. It does them every day.'

She looked up with a quick flush of comprehension; but her glance drooped beneath his, and rested on the floor. He laid his hand on hers, and his voice softened into tenderness. 'Troubles we all have, some brought on us by others, some by ourselves; all have the same origin, the same remedy. Faith and prayer can remove them all.'

She only shook her head, which sank still lower.

'The experience of my grey hairs were worth very little,' he went on, 'if it could not find out untold what few find courage to tell. I have not waited for your confidence, my dear, to become your friend; I have not known you all this time without longing to do you good.'

She pressed his hand gratefully; her proud spirit seemed fast giving way.

'I cannot tell what your secret burden is,' said he,

'but I know One who can—and who will carry it for you. Why then will you toil up the hill Difficulty with it on your shoulders, when a look will roll it off? It will break your heart at last.'

'It will,' she said, without looking up.

'And yet you will not try the only means of deliverance? You will not believe when He says to you, "Ask, and you shall receive?"'

'Do *you* believe that—literally?'

'I do.'

'You believe that a trouble will be removed—a desire granted—for asking?'

'I believe, and am sure, my dear friend, that no one ever asked rightly in vain. Either your desire is given, or it is made up to you in other ways.'

'Dr. Home, I *know* it is not so. I have asked—*He* knows how often! but the answer has never come—never!'

'Will you try once more? Will you promise me not to sleep to-night till you *have* tried it?'

'Will *you* promise *me*,' she returned, in a broken voice, 'that I shall be heard?'

'Yes,' said he, simply and solemnly. 'How or when, I cannot say, but leave it to Him to settle that, and in his own good time and manner—yes! Ah, my dear friend, life would look very different to you now if you had tried this a little sooner.'

'Oh, if I could but think so!' she said with a weary sigh; 'if I could but hope for that one thing, I could bear all the rest; the feelings get dulled, the shoulders accustom themselves to the yoke, the heart learns to beat alone—but never, never can any one tell who has not felt——'

She stopped short, with a sudden change of countenance. The rector looked round for the cause, and found Penelope at his elbow, wearing a somewhat affronted expression of solicitude and inquiry. *Was* Adelaide any better? The spirits of the party had been so seriously damped by her unfortunate indisposition. *Did* she think she felt equal to just a little exertion for once; and would it hurt her to return for an hour or two? Oh, no, Adelaide answered, and if it did, it was of little consequence; and she had risen to obey the summons, when Dr. Home interfered, declared she was only fit for her bed, and recommended Miss Lyndon to despatch her thither forthwith. The languid eyes and pale cheeks told their own tale too plainly even for Miss Lyndon to contradict; it was very unlucky, she must say, but people couldn't help being ill, she supposed, and some people did love to make a fuss, and cause as much inconvenience as possible; however, Adelaide certainly ought to be in bed; *she* would see that Walter's candle was out; his mother need not wait for that. Nobody wished her to over-exert herself, she was sure. And back she went to her guests. Dr. Home was following, thinking enough had been said for his patient to bear at a time; when, looking back, he was struck with the expression of her face, which a few moments before had breathed nothing but gentleness and sorrow. With a quick stride across the hall he was close to her again, and walked by her side to the foot of the stairs; then as she stopped to thank him for his sympathy and advice, and wish him good night, detained her by the hand, and fixed his honest, sensible eyes full on hers.

'Yes, I have shown you a promise; now I must give

you a warning. You are a clever woman, my dear, and a well-read woman, and can understand the meaning of words, which all women cannot, though they are brisk enough in using them. Just turn over in your mind, until you have mastered it thoroughly, the full meaning of this text, "*God resisteth the proud.*" It may help to explain what has perplexed many before you. Good night.'

He wrung her white fingers till he left them as glowing as her cheek and brow had become at his words, and followed his hostess to the drawing-room.

But long after the party had broken up, and everybody was asleep in bed, any eye that had looked towards her window, from the moor, as Randolph did on the first night of his arrival, would have seen the steady lamp burning on, and known how little rest there was for that troubled spirit. Hours passed unheeded away, and still Adelaide Lyndon bent over her writing-desk, or sat with her face buried in her hands; every now and then starting in an agony of restlessness to walk up and down the room; and then, recalled by the dread of waking those beneath, sinking down by her bedside in a still deeper agony of prayer.

Sorrow she knew, and bereavement she knew; danger she had braved; trials of temper were her daily grievance; but never till this night had she known what it was to feel degraded in her own eyes. The unlooked-for appearance of Maurice Randolph, returning after the lapse of years, himself changed in look, in manner, in position, to tell her she too was changed, and fallen from that high estate in which he had delighted to honour her, had struck such a blow at the dignity in which she had so often found refuge, as made it totter

to its base. For it was not that he left her prosperous, and found her poor—left her in the opening joyaunce of youth, and found her widowed and desolate; *this* was not the change she would ever have blushed to own, or he have commented on so bitterly. The friend who remembered what her past had been could alone understand the position of her present; and looked upon her, not as the bereaved widow, dependent on the protection of her husband's family, but as the rebellious and unforgiven daughter, an alien and an outcast from her own!

'God resisteth the proud.' The words rang in her heart as if a messenger of judgment had spoken them. Was it *this* then that had kept the gate of heaven's blessing so heavily closed, that knock long and loud as she might, no answer had come from within? After all she had borne, all she had done, all she had tried so earnestly to do, all she had suffered so unjustly without redress, was this all the comfort that could be offered her? Cruelly deceived, falsely accused, with no justification allowed—no reasoning listened to—spurned as if despicable; rejected even when entreating reconciliation; till the sense of wrong had become as deeply rooted as the remorse, and made an additional weight in the burden she had to bear; was it all because an adversary stood in the way against her—the God that resisteth the proud?

It seemed a terrible thing to admit, yet she could not shut it out. Conscience, roused from sleep as by a trumpet blast, sprang up armed, and would not be at rest, till the enemy within the walls was driven out. The pride that she had unconsciously cherished all her life, the stamp, the heritage of her Norman blood, behind which she had shielded herself from vulgar

contact, from obnoxious claims of duty, from ill-natured sarcasm, and idle remark—suddenly appeared before her, like its author in the garden of Paradise, in its own dark and repulsive form. If God resisted her, had she not all her life been resisting Him? always saying, 'Not thy will, but *mine* be done?' and when reaping what she had sown, and finding the harvest a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow, had she not deemed hardly of Him, that she had asked for bread, and He had given her a stone?

But could He, would He hear her now? Would He help her in her bitterness and desolation, and put away both her sorrow and her sin? Would He resist her still, when she laid her head in the dust, and owned it was the due punishment of her rebellion? She had been promised that He would, and it seemed to her that night as if all power of resistance was gone from her spirit; as if there was no blame she was not ready to take, no humiliation she was not willing to endure, no condition she would not thankfully submit to, but to be at peace with all the world, and forgiven by her mother. A long, long gush of tears at that name choked her voice as she poured forth her prayer; but with them the load of cherished resentment, prejudice and pride, melted from her oppressed heart; and hope, so often crushed, revived again. Before she at length retired to rest, as soon as she was sufficiently calm to steady her hand and collect her thoughts, she wrote the two following letters: one to her brother, Lord Delaunay; the other, in which the first was enclosed, to her husband's kinsman and her own tried friend, Henry Lyndon.

'CANNYMOOR MANORHOUSE.
1 o'clock, A.M.

'MY DEAR BERTRAM,—I am afraid my handwriting can be no pleasant sight to you; I have done nothing to make it so, and gladly would I spare you the pain of these appeals, but you are the only friend who can help me where most I need help. Do you know what it is to have the heart sick with hope deferred—to dream every night you have accomplished your desire, and wake every morning with a blank that makes you loathe the blessed sun? If you do, you can understand why, in spite of all past discouragement, I venture to entreat you once more, if you ever loved me—and I know you did once—to try what can be done towards a reconciliation with my mother. I dare not trust myself to say what I feel on the subject of my long and relentless banishment from her favour: you know —or do you know?—how all my efforts to appease her anger have been rejected: forbidden to write to herself, I have tried in vain through Charlotte Conway to obtain a hearing. You may, perhaps, be more successful, if you will put yourself in my place for an hour, and realize it as far as you can. Is it just, is it right, to treat me as if I had disgraced you? May not my sorrows—they have been many more, dear Bertram, than you are aware of, or will ever know—may they not plead in my behalf to mitigate my sentence? Can your aversion follow the dead to his rest? *He* can never offend you again; his only offence he expiated in his early doom, and in the memory he has left behind, there is nothing that the proudest of our race need be ashamed to own. And his boy, Bertram—if I could

but see him in your arms, and *hers*—could but be assured he would find friends in you, were I taken from him, what a load would be removed from my heart! No, I cannot despair; I will yet trust to your goodness of heart and sense of justice. Mr. Henry Lyndon will present this to you in person; he has my fullest confidence, and has invariably shown me the kindness and consideration of a real friend. Bertram, I throw myself on your love; we were children together; you have not forgotten all our young days; you will—I know you will—stand forward on my behalf, and save me from the gnawing sorrow that, but for God's mercy to those who need, must have worn down my spirit long ago!'

'My dear Henry,—I return you the papers, signed according to your directions. Whatever you think most advisable, I am ready to acquiesce in, having long ago been convinced that my affairs could not be in safer or kinder hands. Instead of apologizing for the encroachments I have already made on your goodness, I am about to test it again. I am always to give you trouble; but *you* know what *mine* is, and will not be surprised that, repulsed as I have hitherto been, I yet persist in another attempt. Enclosed is a letter to my brother. It has occurred to me that either he did not read my former ones, or that they wanted some one at hand to enforce these appeals, and persuade him to give my case more attention. Will you make the trial? Will you take this to him yourself, and speak for me? You who know all, can do so freely, without hazarding the respect to my Walter's memory. It is not a hard thing that I ask, though very hard to do without: I

only entreat to be allowed to see my mother once more. I cannot bear this alienation from my own; and the longer I refrain and wait, in hopes of a token of relenting, the more humiliating becomes my position. Why I am so harshly dealt with, as obdurate, ungrateful and unworthy of notice, I cannot tell; never was a fault more sternly punished than mine. I do long to show Walter to his grandmother and uncle; how could they help loving such a dear little fellow? And I dare not talk of them to him, for fear of the questions he will put, and which I have not courage to answer. But I am taking up your valuable time; you would forgive me if you knew how unhappy I have been to-night; or what the unspeakable comfort is of having so kind a friend.'

CHAPTER VII.

Was kann der Brief enthalten? Eitle Klagen,
Mit denen man das mitleidsvolle Herz
Der Königin verschonen soll.

SCHILLER.

HENRY LYNDON, the only member of her husband's family in whom Adelaide felt confidence, was nephew to the Squire of Cannymoor, and an industrious London lawyer. He had already more than once transacted business for her with her brother, therefore had little difficulty in making an early appointment on the same plea. Armed with the papers referred to in her letter, relating to some money left her by General Conway, to which Lord Delaunay was trustee—the lawyer made his appearance, punctual to the moment, at the door of the house in —— Street, which if not boasting either spaciousness or splendour, was well known as being one of the most elegant in the elegant world.

At one time, some years before the opening of our narrative, when the talents of her son and the beauty of her daughter filled the mind of Lady Delaunay with hopeful visions of eminence for the one and homage for the other, her house had been distinguished for the refined and intellectual quality of its entertainments, where all that was most brilliant and gifted were drawn

together, and yet, where the presence of the small, quietly-dressed hostess, with the piercing eyes and charming address, was generally found to be the greatest attraction. In those days, the pleasant portals of the house in —— Street were ever open to the world, and one of its favourite refuges fron *ennui;* but change had swept over it since then. The dreams of its mistress had faded away, and with them her pleasure in society. Her daughter's marriage was one grievous disappointment; her son's want of ambition was another. The Earl, after all the promise of his university career, had done nothing since to make himself a name, but expended his powers in learning a little of everything that could be learnt; suffering parties and governments to go their own way, without caring whether it crossed his own or not, while he amused himself—such desultory studies could be termed nothing more—among scientific societies and literary institutes; an amateur chemist one day, an astronomer another, a geologist a third, and the fourth a zealous antiquarian: collecting curiosities, haunting old libraries, bestowing equal earnestness on a specimen of a rare butterfly and an illuminated manuscript; on the formation of a delta, and the cutting of an antique ring; on the meaning and derivation of an obsolete word, and on the existence of a central sun. To acquire superficial knowledge easily is a grievous let and hindrance towards acquiring it to any purpose; and facility was the bane of Lord Delaunay's life. It was generally said that there was nothing he could not do, or that he could not be persuaded to leave undone. For ease and quiet, and liberty to enjoy his favourite pursuits without more trouble than suited the humour of the hour, he was

satisfied to let everything else take its course; and never committed an injury, save by omission or non-completion of good. His really generous qualities—and they were many—were, in fact, neutralized by this indolent instability; and as well might his mother have built a tower on the bright green turf that marks the mountain bog, as have allowed her ambition to rear its hopes on the inviting promise of his youth. She was not long in making the discovery that Bertram was no more destined to be the leader of his country's councils, than Adelaide, the rebel and the alien, of its fashion and beauty; and from that time she had gradually withdrawn from the world. Her health was said to be delicate, and though she continued to preside over her son's household, her society was confined to a few intimate friends.

So much the world knew, and Henry Lyndon among the rest; and a little more, that the world did *not* know, but which rather added to than diminished the difficulties of the office allotted him. It was with anything but a sanguine expression of face he had first received Adelaide's request; and that expression had time to deepen while he stood in Lord Delaunay's study, bearing his unpunctuality as best he might.

There were many things in this room to beguile impatience; in itself it was no very distorted reflection of the owner's mind. The bookshelves were crammed with scientific works of every size and description, continental as well as British; reports of societies, maps, diagrams, engravings, loaded the tables and protruded themselves from cabinet doors; here stood a case of minerals, there of shells; specimens of old pottery, of the last-discovered metal, side by side with

a Cellini cup, and a South-sea calabash; a black-letter, oaken-bound volume, of fabulous value from its rarity, half buried by a pile of the *Zoist* and such airy periodicals; in good sooth, a strange medley, as the lawyer could not but observe, with the half-pitying, half-admiring shrewdness of the practical man. But being himself more a lover of art than of science, his attention was most powerfully absorbed by two portraits hanging opposite to each other, both admirably executed by the same master. One was a handsome man in the full vigour of life; the other a child of four or five. The resemblance between them was striking; especially in the large dark eyes, with their peculiarly shaped and fringed lids. The child's attitude was beautifully careless; one arm thrown round the neck of a brown setter, in whose silky coat the other little hand was sticking the flowers with which her lap was filled: a bright vision of graceful happiness, on which the eyes of the other picture seemed to rest with a lingering, half-melancholy tenderness, as though prescient of the sorrows laid up in store. That beloved and joyous child—what had been her destiny?—who cherished her remembrance now in her once happy home?

'Ah, poor woman,' thought the lawyer, with an involuntary shrug, 'I doubt there being many flowers in her lap now: at least, I should be uncommonly sorry to have mine depend on Cannymoor cultivation. Well, she cannot say I did not warn her; the very reason I suppose why she honours me with this office to-day, which I by no means covet. It is a patchwork affair at best, when family grievances have to be made up through a third party. Ay, that is a likeness of her

father, no doubt: young Walter has quite the hereditary eye, if that will do him any good. If he had been alive now,' he went on, half aloud, as he stood with folded arms, looking up at the late Earl's picture, 'it would have made all the difference: but brothers are made of sterner stuff, and the most capacious memory can contrive to forget what it is inconvenient to remember.'

'Soliloquizing, Mr. Lyndon?'

Henry turned, rather caught. Lord Delaunay had come in unobserved, and heard his last sentence. He bowed, with some apologetic remark on the force of habit.

'Nay,' said the Earl, good-humouredly, though with the hurried, hesitating manner peculiar to him, 'it is I who have to apologize for keeping you waiting; and if your observation on short memories applied to me, I can only plead not guilty *intentionally*. I have been sitting for the last two hours between two philosophers, fighting for their several theories on the formation of the world, I believe: I have had as hard work to keep the peace between them, as ever le Bourgeois Gentilhomme had between his masters; and as they could not agree at last, each is to write an essay of nobody knows how many pages, and I am to read both. 'They who in quarrels interpose,' saith the poet—et cetera. I pleaded an appointment at last, and left them still at it, hammer and tongs. I must own I was glad to find I was well out of the fray.'

Henry Lyndon cordially agreed with him that it was no agreeable task to mediate between contending parties; the rather that the chances were generally against your being thanked for your interference—if you were forgiven.

Lord Delaunay winced at this, and changed the subject hastily. 'You were admiring my father's portrait, Mr. Lyndon? It was very like—considered one of X——'s best—a speaking likeness, people call it, which always makes me long, like poor Cowper, "O that those lips *had* language!"' He came close to Henry's side, and stood looking up at the picture for a few moments in silence.

'After all, Mr. Lyndon,' he resumed, with a sigh, 'with all our discoveries and improvements, we have found nothing yet more valuable than the art which keeps lost friends, the best we ever had, fresh in the memory as when they stood living before us—as if for affection there were no such realities as change and death! Is it not a fine face, sir? look at the goodness expressed in the mouth.'

'It is so indeed,' said Henry Lyndon, 'and the look it seems to be fastening on the portrait opposite, makes me disposed to echo your lordship's own wish.'

'What is that, sir?'

'Oh that those lips had language!'

'Well, sir, and if they had—'

'Why then, my Lord, my presence here would be unnecessary. As I know your lordship's time is valuable, perhaps you will allow me to enter on my business at once. I have some papers to submit to you, requiring your signature, but they need not detain you long.'

This was music to the Earl, who detested business, and escaped from it whenever he could. The words and tone of the lawyer, moreover, gave him a nervous apprehension that there was something more to come, and he was eager to get it all over, and escape. He glanced hurriedly over the papers laid before him—signed his

name wherever required, and repeated several times, 'All very correct—all quite right—whatever you think best, Mr. Lyndon; I am sure, I am only too glad to think that she—that my sister has so good a friend, so kind an adviser.'

'Lady Adelaide has honoured me with so much of her friendship,' said Henry, 'that she has a right to expect mine should not fail her in return: and as a proof of it, has requested me to give you this, and wait for your answer,' producing the letter, from which Lord Delaunay recoiled in dismay.

'My dear sir—my dear sir, it really is of no use—none whatever! I know all she would say; I have tried—everything has been tried, and to no purpose. These letters only add fuel to fire, and destroy every hope of its dying out of itself. It is no fault of mine, but ladies are so impetuous in their language, and so bitter in their recriminations, I had almost vowed, as my mother did, never to look at another on this subject. You must know yourself it can do no good.'

But Henry knew nothing of the kind, and still held the letter towards him so decidedly, he was obliged to take it; eyeing it as it lay in his hand with marked distaste and apprehension.

'I suppose you know what it contains, Mr. Lyndon. All the old subject, of course!'

'It *is* an old subject now, my Lord: old enough, I could submit, to be buried and forgotten.'

'Well, my dear sir, and do not you suppose I have tried to do so before now? I am sure no one hates this uncomfortable state of things as I do, and it really is not fair to be appealing to me, as if I were the most hard-hearted, tyrannical brother in the world, and she

the most injured woman. It is not using me well, and I have half a mind not to open the letter at all.'

He glanced at Henry Lyndon, in expectation of some remonstrance; but Henry had taken up one of the papers just signed, and was to all appearance absorbed in its contents. After taking two or three impatient turns about the room, the Earl presently stopped near the window, paused irresolutely for some minutes, and then, as the lawyer expected, reluctantly tore open the envelope.

'What is the good of this?' sighed he, wearily, as he did so; 'I am very sorry for her, very—I would do anything for her that I could; if she wanted money, she should have it; but as she never asks for it, I suppose all is right in that quarter. I have no notion, for my part, of keeping up resentments so long; but when words beget words, and arguing and recrimination go on, letter after letter, there is no help for it. I can assure you, Mr. Lyndon, whatever might be the original dissatisfaction and disappointment, neither my mother nor myself have anything but great respect for your family; if it were only that, all this might have been settled long ago; but ladies' letters!—they make more enemies in one word than can be got rid of in a hundred.'

He gave another sigh, and opened his own.

There was nothing to provoke him there. Very soon Henry observed his hand drawn across his eyes, then that he turned back from the end to reperuse the commencement; and when it was finished, he laid it down, with a very regretful shake of the head.

'Poor girl, poor girl! it *is* hard for her, uncommonly hard! I wish I could see how it can be remedied.

She seems in wretched spirits, upon my word. I hope to goodness they treat her well down there. Ahem! what sort of place is—what's-its-name—Cannymoor, Mr. Lyndon? Does it affect her health?'

Henry had never heard that it did. If Lady Adelaide wrote in depressed spirits, he submitted it might easily be accounted for on other grounds. This Lord Delaunay could not deny, and the more he pondered over the letter, the warmer grew his expressions of sympathy. Henry saw his advantage, and pursued it.

'Anxious as my uncle and his family may be to make her happy, it is impossible they can compensate her for so many bereavements. At her age, to have lost a husband and child, and, for that husband's sake, to be cut off from her nearest and dearest relations, is a heavy burden to bear, and one under which a feebler spirit must have sunk. Admit, my Lord, it is rather a severe method of dealing with such an offender; and when she humbles herself before you to ask forgiveness——'

'But that is the thing! that is just what she will not do, and never has done!' cried Lord Delaunay, drawing a chair close to that of the lawyer. 'To you, as her legal adviser, as well as her husband's relation, and as a man of the world, who can enter into the difficulties of these cases, I may speak freely; the marriage itself would have been forgiven long ago, I am sure. Your relation was a gallant young man, who died in the discharge of his duty, and whatever my mother's private feelings were at first, she would in time have mastered them; for all our sakes, everybody would have promoted a reconciliation. If Adelaide would, as you say, really humble herself, and ask her forgiveness submissively,

there would be a chance—but she does not seem to have an idea how deeply her mother is offended. She craves reconciliation, and pleads that she has suffered enough, and so she has, poor girl, no doubt; but that is not the style of petition I would venture to show. How they managed it, I don't know, nor who set them on; but there did pass, after her marriage, one or two such letters between them; so bitter, so argumentative, as clever women's letters very often are, that Lady Delaunay solemnly declared, until the humblest submission was made to her, she would never look at another. Now my mother, Mr. Lyndon, seldom forms a determination hastily; but once formed, there is no turning her; you might as well think of moving the Great Pyramid. It is a family failing among us, to carry firmness to excess; we are all alike in that respect, I am afraid.'

'If I remember rightly, your lordship was not with Lady Delaunay at the time of the marriage?'

'No, I was abroad, unluckily. I meant to have come home in time to see Adelaide before she sailed, but one thing and another hindered me, and I was too late. But I heard all the particulars from my cousin, Miss Conway, my sister's most intimate friend and companion, who knew the whole affair from first to last, and she has told me how imperious, almost insolent, was the tone in which Adelaide wrote. My cousin has always stood her friend, but even she could not justify such behaviour.'

'Ah!' said Henry Lyndon, dubiously. This was throwing quite a new light on the affair, and he began to see his way more distinctly. The Earl went on repeating, 'What can I do? Does she want money,

do you suppose? Shall I send her a cheque? Or, suppose I were to run down and see her?'

Henry caught at the suggestion, and strongly advised him to carry it out. A word from him would have more effect on Lady Adelaide than twenty from any one else, and he would probably induce her to make the required submission, which she might not be aware was so absolutely necessary. There was his little nephew, too, as fine a little fellow as ever was seen, only likely to be rather a perilous charge to a mother to bring up; as his passion at present was for chemistry and experiments, and half the village was in terror from the results of his first attempts in natural philosophy. The uncle's face brightened, and he rubbed his hands with marked satisfaction. Such a lad ought to be encouraged, and he should be. He would go and see them forthwith before he went abroad, as he must indispensably do in a few days, to attend a meeting of *savans*; he must see that boy, and show him a thing or two that he would not find in his popular science; and he was conning his sister's letter again, to help him to decide, when the door opened, and a lady came in, fashionably and elegantly dressed, so as in some measure to conceal the traces of time on her person, which in early youth had evidently been attractive.

Lord Delaunay instinctively dropped the letter on the table, and Henry Lyndon as promptly covered it with the other papers. This was done in a second of time, and before he could ask himself why he did it.

'You are engaged, my dear Delaunay; shall I disturb you?' asked the lady, advancing to the table, over which her quick eyes swept in an instant, resting first

on the papers, and then on the lawyer, who had risen to bow. 'I came to look for that pamphlet you recommended me last night, I hope I do not interrupt——'

'Not at all, not at all, my dear Charlotte,' said the Earl, trying, though in vain, to appear quite at ease; 'allow me to introduce Mr. Henry Lyndon to you—Miss Conway. A little private business, Charlotte; we shall have done in a few minutes; pray sit down, Mr. Lyndon. As you say, that investment will be much the safest; I leave it all to you. I shall be at your service for the Museum in ten minutes, Charlotte.'

'Pray do not hurry yourself,' said the lady, quietly taking up the torn envelope from the floor where Lord Delaunay had thrown it, and looking at the handwriting. 'I did not observe that you had heard from your sister this morning, Delaunay.'

'I had not then, but Mr. Lyndon brought me a note, just a few lines—'

'How singular that she could not write by the post! So like her, to put manœuvre into the smallest trifles! May I see her note?'

'Certainly—that is—I don't know where I laid it just this minute.'

'Oh! if it is one of her secrets, pray don't trouble yourself.'

'Secrets! nonsense,' said he, hastily; 'it is only what you know already, poor girl. I should *like* you to read it, and help me with your advice. Mr. Lyndon, is it among those papers anywhere?'

'Most likely, my Lord,' said Henry, drily.

The Earl, blushing beneath his cousin's eye, bustled among the papers, and found poor Adelaide's appeal at the bottom. Miss Conway, after one sarcastic glance

at the unmoved lawyer, read it attentively, and then deliberately tore it into small pieces, and threw it into the waste basket.

'Those things are better destroyed, Delaunay. Well, what are you going to do? Are you to have a touching Sebastian and Viola scene, or do you mean to go, like the good Vicar of Wakefield, and bring the prodigal home behind you on a pillion?'

'Nonsense, my dear Charlotte, I only thought—'

'Do you mean to go up to your mother, and say you think she has behaved like a tyrant, and you insist on her receiving her daughter with proper respect and apologies? for that seems to me the drift of all these entreaties. Or would it be more dignified to call a meeting of your two houses, and in solemn state fraternise then and there? A true philosopher like you, Delaunay, considers all men equal, from the Chancellor to the shoeblack.'

'Charlotte, Charlotte, your vivacity carries you away; you do not think before you speak,' interrupted the Earl, visibly disconcerted; 'Mr. Lyndon does not know you as well as I do, and he will suppose you intend to affront him.'

Henry Lyndon bowed with perfect composure; he rather thought he understood the lady better than her cousin did, but he did not think it necessary to say so. He observed it was out of the question for him to imagine an affront to be intended from a lady whose sense of justice would remind her that in no instance had his family intruded themselves on hers.

'Very true, very true,' said Lord Delaunay, eagerly; 'we are the obliged parties, on the contrary. I feel it, I assure you. It comes to this, Charlotte, joking apart,

I *must* run down and see that poor girl and her little one. You should hear what Mr. Lyndon says of him, the young rogue, with his experiments. Just like myself at his age, when I used to fag his mother to help me make fireworks. I should like to have the training of that boy.'

'I have no doubt there is nothing his friends would like better, my dear Delaunay, and that you should adopt him altogether as your heir. It is only a pity he cannot have the title. Shall you bring him back with you *if* you go?'

'*If* I go? why do you lay such a stress on the contingency? What is to hinder me?'

'Nothing whatever, Delaunay; you will do as you please, of course. It shall never be said it was *I* who threw difficulties in your way; but seriously, in your mother's state of health at present, I should be careful how I did anything to agitate her. You know how trying the subject is; she is always ill after it, and I do not think her at all strong just now.'

'You are always thoughtful and attentive—you always have been, my dear Charlotte; but in this case—'

'And supposing you went, what good could you do? Just revive old grievances, and open old wounds; hear us abused, and be at a loss what to answer. I know your easy good-nature! And then what chance would there ever be of a reconciliation? No, no; if you ask my advice, that would be the last thing you ought to do. You see, Mr. Lyndon,' turning to that gentleman with more politeness than she had hitherto shown, 'if it rested with Lord Delaunay and myself, nothing would be easier; but the case stands thus—Lady Adelaide has mortally offended her mother; and every time she has

written—and this pathetic style of appeal is very easy to her, she has a fluent pen, and knows how to paint a position strikingly to give it effect—it has always resulted in a wider estrangement. I cannot take the responsibility of disturbing the peace of one who is a second mother to me, unavailingly. If Adelaide had been guided by me!—but she was always the same; a strange mixture of pride and artifice; apparent daring with the subtlest talent for intrigue and finesse. It would be madness for you to be drawn into this, Delaunay.'

'Well, then I will just write her a friendly line, to tell her we *wish* we could do something, eh?'

'If you ask my advice, I should say *you* had better not write. Do not you see it implies you blame your dear mother's conduct in the whole affair? and how keenly she would resent *your* being on loving terms with your sister while she is under her censure! Depend upon it, the only way is to go on quietly, as we are doing, and trust to time to bring about a better state of things. If you like, *I* will write; it will not so much signify if your mother blames *me*—I will take the risk on myself for Adelaide's sake.'

'Thank you, Charlotte; if you think it is best, suppose you do. She will be disappointed, I am afraid,' added he, with a sigh and a shrug, half resigned, half impatient; 'but I cannot help it—I wish I could.'

'So do we all, most sincerely,' said Miss Conway, and she sat down at once, and wrote to her cousin.

'My dear Adelaide,—Your brother received your letter this morning by the hands of Mr. Henry Lyndon, and has deputed me to answer it, as his feelings will not

allow him to make the attempt. It is very painful to us both to appear indifferent to your unfortunate position, which every year must render more irksome; but you may be assured if it were in his power or mine to do anything to alter it, nothing would give us more pleasure. The delicate state of your mother's health, at present, renders it impossible to disturb her by a renewal of the subject she has forbidden—the rather that we are quite sure it would be unavailing, except on such terms as you have always declared nothing would justify your submitting to. On that head you must be the best judge; perhaps the want of the comforts and enjoyments of your station, which you threw too hastily away, may have changed your mind. I can readily imagine how earnestly you must desire to regain your former footing in society; and you are old enough now not to be insensible to such considerations as you once despised. I can truly say, I wish you may eventually succeed, but it would be a breach of friendship to hold out any false hopes. It is gratifying to us to know that you are in a good home, with every comfort about you that your station admits. Your brother desires his love, and, at the same time, hopes you will refrain from these complaints in future, as they are distressing to him and useless to you.

Believe me, dear Adelaide,

Affectionately yours,

CHARLOTTE CONWAY.'

Lord Delaunay glanced over his cousin's shoulder as she wrote, and again shrugged his shoulders, but made no comment.

'There, Bertram,' she said, as she sealed the envelope; 'nothing can be kinder than that, I am sure.

I suppose we must trouble Mr. Lyndon to forward it, as Adelaide seems to wish it should all pass through his hands.'

'I am sure I am deeply obliged to Mr. Lyndon—deeply,' said the Earl, avoiding Henry's eye, who, as he took the letter, bowed, regretting, in pointed tones, that he had been able to do *so little* to deserve thanks; and so withdrew, hearing Miss Conway, as he closed the door, tell her cousin, now that tiresome affair was settled, she would be charmed to go with him to the Museum.

'Go!' thought Henry Lyndon, rather viciously, as he walked away, setting his teeth hard; 'go, spiteful, mischief-making woman—and see if there is a mummy, a skeleton, a fossil reptile there more utterly devoid of human kindness than yourself! I think I would give a year of my life, valuable as it is, to see my friend T—— handle you in the witness-box for half an hour. I will be even with you yet before I have done with you, even though that pleasure be denied me; for it is plain enough now while that influence is at work, we shall make nothing of that slippery, *dilettante* brother. A good two hours I have frittered away upon them, and all to no purpose.'

His discontent was carrying him along with such hasty strides, he did not discover he was pursued till, at the turn into another street, he suddenly found an arm passed in his. It was Lord Delaunay, rather out of breath.

'What a pace you walk, Mr. Lyndon! It was all I could do to catch you, and I have just one more word to say. There is a strong feeling, you may have observed, on this subject; and I would rather avoid discussions, if possible, and perhaps it is as well I should

not actually interfere. But you can tell my sister from me, that if she will, through you, send me by return of post a letter of complete, unreserved submission to her mother (deferring all justification or defence to another opportunity), simply asking to be forgiven—I will undertake to show it to her, and do my best to plead her cause; and if my mother consents to an interview, I will go down to Cannymoor and fetch her. I can say no more than that.'

'Certainly not, and your sister will feel it deeply,' said Henry, cordially.

'But understand this, Mr. Lyndon, and make her do so. I must go abroad next week, so unless her decision is immediate, it will be too late. I do not wish for any argument or discussion. If she cannot conscientiously write as I propose, her silence will be answer enough, and all will remain as it is at present, with this understanding, that she appeals to me no more. I put it into her own hands to accept or reject—once rejected, I can have nothing more to do with it. But she will be too glad, do not you think so? She seems very much in earnest.'

'I cannot imagine that she will hesitate,' said Henry Lyndon; 'and no representation on my part shall be wanting. Her dignity will assuredly be safe in the hands of her mother and brother; no concession will be required of her which it would be beneath them to accept; and having offended, she may surely ask forgiveness, without lowering herself in their esteem or her own.'

'You have expressed it exactly, my dear sir; I leave it to you. Depend upon it, it is our only chance, and I only wish it had been done sooner.'

With a cordial shake of the hand, the Earl then turned away, and walked back as hurriedly as he had come. Henry Lyndon, in high spirits, hastened to his chambers, and despatched Miss Conway's letter, enclosed in one from himself, delivering his message, and urging, in the strongest language, the expediency of an immediate and satisfactory reply. He expected it by return of post, but day after day passed away, and no answer came.

CHAPTER VIII.

Despised—neglected—left alone to die!
CRABBE.

MR. RANDOLPH wanted a horse, and as that part of England was noted for a particularly fine breed, whether his stay was to be long or brief, it was always money well laid out, as Mr. Spindler told him. So warmly did he second the scheme, that he offered to drive him over to the horse-fair at Shareham, and to put him in the way of making a good bargain. The offer being accepted, they started together, but Mr. Spindler being no great amateur in horse-flesh himself, introduced Randolph to one or two friends who were, and left him in their hands; while he executed his own business, and divers household commissions for Miss Chatterley. When he rejoined his friend at the livery-stable where they had appointed to meet, he found that instead of making a good bargain, and securing 'a good, steady, quiet hack,' the traveller had given a decidedly high price to a gipsy, for a horse whose general aspect was far from encouraging to timid nerves. The glare of the eye, the opening nostril, the restless pawing of the fore foot, with some suspicious motion of the hinder legs, all told of difficulties to the rider, past, present, and to come. Mr. Randolph, however, seemed full of complacency and satisfaction, and was giving the

most cheerful directions to the ostler about sending his new acquisition to Cannymoor—when Mr. Spindler ventured to remonstrate. Did he know what he was doing, buying a horse of one of those vagabonds who cheated everybody they came near—to say nothing of carrying fevers wherever they went? He would not have dealings with one of 'em, not if they offered him their stolen cattle for a quarter their value, and he hoped Mr. Randolph would think better of it. He would be sure to repent his bargain sooner or later. Randolph laughed, and looked at the gipsy, a tall, sinewy specimen of his race, who was lingering near the horse, as if loth to lose sight of it. He might have thought as Mr. Spindler did, he said, if he were not sure, let who would cheat him, it would not be one of *that* tribe: and he held out his hand to the fellow, who took it with evident pride and satisfaction, and presently pulled his customer aside to give him some very earnest advice.

'There, Mr. Spindler,' said Randolph, as they drove away, 'so far from taking me in, the fellow has been telling me exactly how to treat the animal, and to manage him when restive, as he is apt to be. The fact is, I believe, you are pretty correct in your general estimation of their honesty; but if you do make a friend among them, he is staunch enough. I had an opportunity of doing good service to some of that tribe once, and saw a good deal of them, and have more than once received proofs of their warm feeling towards me. There are rogues enough among them, but a few have been reformed, and turned out well: only a few, I am sorry to say.'

'No, that I can answer for; and I should be apt to

doubt the reformation even of those few. I have no faith in conversions, I can't say I have; and if there is one thing on earth I have less patience with than another, it's your idle, beggarly tramps, that should all go to the tread-mill or the hulks, if I had my way. It's your fine charities that make the beggars, and I make it a matter of conscience not to belong to any of 'em. There's a deal too much of that sort of thing in Cannymoor, and Dr. Home is at the bottom of it all: never easy without his hand in your pocket: I hate that sort of officiousness. However, as to gipsies, we have all of us a horror of them—they brought us a fever once, and not a soul will tolerate the sight of them now; the people declare they brought the potato rot one year, and a bad crop another: for you see, though we won't harbour them in the village, there are plenty of wild corners about here where they encamp, especially in fair time. Oh, stop; I nearly forgot to ask if there are any letters.'

He pulled up at the post-office, and after receiving a couple for himself, inquired if there were any for the Manorhouse; and the clerk, who seemed quite accustomed to the sort of thing, handed them over without hesitation.

'One of our inconveniences,' explained Mr. Spindler, as they drove on, 'is having no Cannymoor post-office, and depending for the delivery of our letters on a lazy old vagabond, not worth his salt, who crawls backwards and forwards twice a day with the bag! I have grumbled till I am tired, but he is a sort of pet of the good ladies, and they say his bread depends upon it—just as if public convenience was not to be considered first. They won't heed me, so sooner than wait till

five in the evening, I sometimes fetch my own letters, and Mr. Lyndon's too, and very glad he is to get them —sometimes. Ay, there's one I see, he won't like quite so well. Just take the reins a bit, will you, Mr. Randolph? My right arm feels a twinge that shows me we shall have rain to-night.'

While Randolph drove, which he did at a pace that rather astounded the old horse, Mr. Spindler put on his spectacles, and conned the outside of his friend's correspondence. His own, he doubtless remembered, would keep.

'A call on those shares of his, I know: he wouldn't take my advice—never will. Ah, and a letter from Baynes and Pultham, I'll bet a pound. I know the look of their documents pretty well. I have heard things of that house that I don't much like. They don't carry on half the business they did when Lyndon was at the head of it. He might have doubled his capital by this time if he had kept the management in his own hands, instead of being a sleeping partner, and sinking so much money in that house and grounds, just out of family pride. The real landowner ought to hold the whole of the property, there's no doubt about it; but wilful men will have their own way. I wish he may never repent it—but if Baynes and Pultham *were* to shake—and stranger things have happened—we may live to see how much better Master Walter is for all the fuss made about his inheritance.'

'Would it ruin Mr. Lyndon, then?'

'Ruin! not quite that. It might be the best thing for him in the end; but there would be a fine down-come of all our pride and consequence! Ah, here's a letter for her ladyship. Hers are few and far between. London,

eh?—that will be some business, too, I'll warrant. Not that hers can be very extensive. Whatever her fortune was, there's not much of it left. Between ourselves, the poor young captain was as wild as a hawk, and it's my belief he was over head and ears in debt when he married, and her money went to clear him; but that's neither here nor there. I know a party who knew them both in India; and for all our good friends at the Manorhouse may say, it was pretty well known out there that his wife was head, wits, memory, everything to him, or he never would have held his ground for a minute. He was brave enough, poor fellow! but with no sense in money matters—not an ounce; and proud and high as she carries herself, she was often, to my certain knowledge, pinched enough in her own expenses to meet his. But I don't mention this at the Manorhouse, nor to anybody, indeed: we all swear by Walter's memory, you know. I did hint once to Lady Adelaide what I had heard, and she gave me such a look for my pains, thinks I, least said soonest mended, and I never touched on the subject again. Hulloa! which way are you going?'

'Is not this the nearest?'

'Ay, but not where I mean to take you. Turn to the right; I want you to see where the new line was to have been cut, and will be someday, I hope, when people come to their senses. Only don't rattle along at such a rate; for the road is full of ups and downs, and you shake me to death.'

It had not escaped the notice of the family, though no one could divine the cause, that since the evening of her fainting fit, a change had passed over Adelaide's

demeanour. She was either in a state of feverish restlessness, for which constant and fatiguing exertion seemed the only relief—or when this passed off, her spirits appeared subdued to a degree that quite fidgetted Miss Penelope. The repeated inquiries of the neighbours after her late indisposition were all received with such patient politeness—the family plans and arrangements were all so quietly acquiesced in—the little side thrusts put out by Miss Lyndon to try their effect, were taken so passively, that her sister began to think something serious must be the matter. Yet she could not be ill, when she was able to take walks that would kill anybody else; and it could not be bad news, for she had had no letters: whatever it was, it was very irritating; for there is no pleasure in hitting an antagonist who will not hit again, and the more anxious Penelope grew, the more acid waxed her temper. The morning had been spent by Adelaide partly over Walter's lessons, partly in his play-room, assisting him in his 'experiments;' then, while he was in the garden, she had taken her turn as usual, of sitting with Mrs. Lyndon in the drawing-room, till it should be time for their daily walk. The restlessness being rather strong upon her at that moment—for it was the day when she had calculated that her letter might arrive—she was working it off as best she could, by plying her needle as vigorously on Walter's new shirts, as if her daily pittance depended on 'seam, and gusset, and band.' A slight variety was provided by the poor old lady's knitting getting into some difficulty or other every now and then, when it would be, 'My love, I am very tiresome to you, but somehow I don't seem to be very clever at this to-day;' and then Lady Adelaide laid down her

own work, took up fallen stitches, and smoothed hopeless-looking tangles, and as soon as all was set straight, went on again as hard as ever.

'What notable fingers you have, my love! There you go—stitch, stitch; I can hardly count fast enough to keep up with you. I did not know young ladies were so notable now-a-days; I thought they liked French, and music, and—and that sort of thing, better.'

Lady Adelaide answered her cheerfully; boys grew so fast, their mothers had something else to do besides keeping up their accomplishments.

'Ah, my love, you may say so; his uniform and things kept me awake half the night, because I knew he wouldn't allow for growing; and you always should, you know. But he laughed when I told him so; everybody laughs at a poor silly old thing like me, don't they?'

Adelaide assured her to the contrary.

'No, now I think of it, *you* don't laugh, my love. You never laugh at all, do you? I never heard you. But then,' after a pause, 'I dare say when you and the girls get together—young people always like to be together—you have your little jokes all to yourselves; don't you, my love?'

Adelaide was saved answering this by Penelope having entered in time to overhear it; her hands full of account books and her face of domestic care.

'Whatever is the dear mother dreaming of, now? Jokes? yes, mamma, to be sure; fit to kill ourselves. You have no idea how merry we are, and as to Adelaide, she is the very life and soul of the party!'

'Ah, yes, so she is; she always has something pretty to say to everybody, hasn't she, Penny?'

'I dare say, ma'am (*sotto voce*), if one could only get at it. "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," I am sure.'

Then as Adelaide took no notice, but kept her head bent over her work, Penelope turned to the writing-table, and sat vehemently down to her accounts.

'It is all very well to talk of joking; but it is no joke keeping house, I know that—with my father raving at me half the morning about our expenses, and saying we cannot go on, and we *must* retrench, and he cannot afford having so many people, and all, till I am quite sick of it altogether.'

'So many people?' repeated Adelaide.

'Yes, that is what he says. It is the truth, I am sure. We are a larger party than we used to be, and what with prices being higher, and one thing and another, we *are* spending more than we ought, I know that. I can't help it; I wish I could.'

'Neither can I, Penelope.'

'Humph!—well, no matter. I suppose as you say so, you can't. That's soon settled. Don't talk.'

Lady Adelaide did not want to talk, and took the rebuff so quietly, Miss Lyndon felt she could not bear it much longer.

'It may sound very inhospitable, my dear,' she resumed, while she mended her pen, 'but I must say, considering all things, your own family might think of us a little, and do something for you and Walter. I do feel we are rather unfairly treated on the whole, and you must see it yourself.'

This was a stroke reserved for emergencies. Lady Adelaide winced under the lash; it was one against

which she had no defence. She worked on without reply; not trusting herself to make any.

'Whatever you can be stitching away at so desperately I cannot conceive,' remarked Miss Penny, presently, after a refreshing survey of the month's consumption of butcher's meat. 'You never mean to say Walter wants more shirts! It was only the other day he had new ones. Really you are bringing him up to an extravagance—I only hope his noble relations will condescend to do something for him, as this property will never be enough. It is high time they did, *I* think, and my father thinks so too; and so, I should have supposed, would you.'

'What do you wish me to do?' asked Lady Adelaide, in a low voice that was almost humble.

'Do? Why, what anybody else with common sense would have done long ago. Write to your brother, Lord Delaunay, to make you a proper allowance.'

Lady Adelaide shook her head; *that* she could never do.

'Well, I cannot see why! Here you do not care how much *we* do; it never seems to offend your pride at all; but you will not bring it down to claim what you certainly have a right to expect, from those who can afford it so much better!'

'Penelope, my pride, as you call it—and I suppose you give it the right name—has been brought down lower than you think; though not so low as to ask for money where I am denied justice. Wait a little while longer; I did not know my father grudged me and Walter a home; but since he does, and since you tell me plainly that you do, depend upon it I will do my best to free you from the burden, if you only give me time.'

'There! now you are off in one of your high and mighty tempers! Who ever grudged you a home, I should like to know? You have no right to use so unkind an expression,' said Penelope, on whose part more than half of all this had been merely word warfare, with little expectation or desire of its being attended to. 'I shall take care my father hears of it, after all he has done, half ruining himself for Walter's sake! But it is just like you—just what Mr. Randolph said the other evening—'

'What did Mr. Randolph say?'

'Oh, never mind; I don't remember the words exactly. Don't talk; I shall never have done if you keep interrupting me so.'

Lady Adelaide put up her work, and rose to leave the room.

'Where are you going?'

'To take a walk with Walter. Have you any objection?'

'Yes, I was just going to tell you, my father does not wish Walter to go off the grounds to-day. He has heard there are gipsies about on account of the Shareham horse-fair, and he is afraid of his catching some fever or other. We don't want doctor's bills to add to our other expenses.'

The colour rose most rebelliously into Lady Adelaide's face at this new vexation. She could bear anything better than an infringement on her boy's pleasures, and for a moment seemed half inclined to do battle for his rights and privileges. Instead of the expected remonstrance, however, she only gave a quick, restless sigh, and left the room; murmuring a line that was often in her thoughts just then,

Geduld! Geduld! wenn's Herz auch bricht!

A few minutes after, Miss Lyndon saw her hurrying out alone.

'It is most extraordinary,' thought Penelope, now quite anxious and uneasy. 'I am sure something is the matter. It is quite unnatural to see her spirit down like that. I would rather by half she had shown some of her airs, and I did all I could to make her. I *must* speak to my father.'

Blest be the man who invented exercise! and blest the mind and body that can avail themselves of its aid! For the overworked brain, for the irritated temper, for depression of spirits, weariness of nerves, indolence, despondency, and such like evils—what remedy can be named so simple, that has so often been found, if not a cure, at least a relief?

Adelaide Lyndon felt its influence; it was the one in which, next to Dr. Home's, experience had given her most faith. Such walks as she and her boy accomplished, to whom every spot for miles round was known, had long been marked in Cannymoor, where very few took long walks for pleasure, as proof of her 'singularity;' but without convincing either of them that they ought to be given up. Walter's pride and pleasure in them was so great, his mother had been obliged to slip out privately; as, if he had seen her, there would infallibly have been a mutiny against the obnoxious decree. It was as great a punishment to her as to him. Deprived of the little companion, whose chatter, and constant demands on her imagination or memory, to tell him stories or explain difficulties, to say nothing of carrying all the treasures, animal, mineral, and vegetable, that it pleased him to collect—

served so effectually to take her out of herself—she could only hope to tire down her excited nerves by pure exertion; and she set about this in her usual determined manner, by taking the most fatiguing road she knew, through the wildest, most broken part of the neighbourhood.

The air blew freshly, but not unpleasantly, in her face; there was a whisper of coming spring in its light breath, to which she could not be insensible. Hope will, must revive, when nature does; it is impossible to despond over the present or the future, when everything about us testifies to the watchful care of Heaven, and the boundless resources by which the earth renews her youth. Her spirits rose; she began to look forward, to reckon on the probability, next to certainty, of a speedy and favourable answer to her appeal; of a happy result—too happy almost to be realized—the happiness of being in her mother's arms, and there finding sympathy for all past, and deliverance from all present troubles; sheltered from all the buffetings of a hard world; from the pressure of poverty and the irksomeness of ungenial companionship; from Penelope's temper and Maurice Randolph's scorn—that last, the overflowing drop of bitterness, which she felt she could not bear, and must not think of.

But with the quickened hope, came again the impatience of suspense. Over and over again, she calculated the chances that seemed to fix this day as the one when she would hear. Henry had, immediately on the receipt of hers, sent her a few lines, promising to do all he could; and she knew him to be prompt in action as he was clear in judgment; he would not lose a day that he could help—no, the answer

must arrive that post; and goaded by the passionate longing, she went on without considering time and distance, till she suddenly discovered that she had taken the wrong turning, and come considerably out of her way. This recalled her to herself, and remembering the report of the gipsies being in the neighbourhood, she did not feel very desirous of falling in with one of their encampments, so far from any assistance. The spot to which she had come, an old deserted quarry, overrun with bushes and underwood, was well known as one of their favourite haunts. It was a lovely place in summer; a little spring, now swollen by the recent snow into the dignity of a stream, gushed from the rock, and poured down the bank, along the side of the steep lane; it was generally a treasury of wild flowers, and Walter had last year brought his mother there on a botanizing expedition, of which it may be observed that his share of the work consisted in gathering promiscuously all that took his fancy—and hers in selecting, carrying, and arranging them for him. Since the summer, Walter's zeal for botany having cooled, he had been eager to explore the quarry for geological specimens; it had several times been planned, but failed hitherto; and now his mother felt almost resentful at the tyranny that had kept him at home when he might have enjoyed his coveted pleasure. She changed her opinion, however, presently, when about half way up the lane she heard a sound to which she was never indifferent—the crying of a child. With some difficulty, active as she was, she climbed the rough bank, and made her way through the bushes and furze, till she found a little dirty figure, crouched under the shelter of a large stone, rubbing her eyes, and keeping

up a dismal wail, as if things in general were going on in a decidedly unsatisfactory manner. It took a great deal of gentle coaxing to stop this, without scaring the little creature into a precipitate flight; but by dint of patience and soft words, Lady Adelaide made out at last that she was hungry, very hungry, and Ally was cross, and wouldn't give her *nowt*, and mammy lay a-bed, and wouldn't get up, and the others were all gone, and she was *so* hungry! Where was her mammy then? Oh, yon, in the tent. How long had she been in bed? Oh, she was in the cart yesterday, but they stopped last night, and mammy didn't get up when the rest did; so they all went to the fair, and left them and the donkey, and Ally; and Ally had *give* her no dinner, and she was *so* hungry! 'Suppose you take me to your mammy then, and perhaps we could persuade Ally to give you some?' The child jumped up, readily enough, rubbed the remains of the tears off her dirty little cheeks, and led the way, half climbing, half tumbling, down into the quarry—where the smouldering embers of a fire, with the camp kettle still suspended over it, and the presence of a lean donkey, with his legs hobbled, musing mournfully over an empty sack, confirmed the little one's story. It was evident that the gipsies had been there, and probably meant to return. Under the shelter of the hollow rock, a kind of shed had been hastily put up, of blankets and sacking stretched on poles; and beneath, on a heap of miscellaneous articles, covered with an old cloak and rug, lay a woman, who, it needed but a glance of Lady Adelaide's experienced eye to perceive, was so ill as to require immediate assistance.

It might have been about an hour later, that Mr.

Spindler and his gig came slowly up the lane, followed at some distance on foot by Randolph, who, finding it hopeless to get the old horse out of a walk on such a road, preferred a cigar and the revolving of sweet and bitter thoughts undisturbed, to the endless flow of his companion's conversation. Just as the latter arrived in front of the bank, down jumped the little tattered object described above, hailing him with a shrill voice, 'Please, good gentleman, stop!'

Mr. Spindler dexterously whisked his whip in the direction of the outstretched hand, and dropped a stinging application across the fingers. 'You little thieving vagrant, be off with you, or I'll have you in jail, I will, before you can say Jack Robinson. Off, I say!' And again the whip cracked; the child set up a howl, and vanished; Mr. Spindler moved on complacently, and was reflecting how easily all such nuisances and drains on one's pocket might be put down, if everybody had as much presence of mind as himself—when another voice, more urgent than the last, arrested his progress.

'Mr. Spindler! Mr. Spindler! for heaven's sake, stop!'

He did stop, amazed beyond expression. 'Good gracious, Lady Adelaide! where have you dropped from?'

'Mr. Spindler, thank God you are come. I was almost in despair. Will you come and help me?'

The large drops were on her brow, and her voice was quivering from fatigue and haste.

'Help you? of course, my Lady, of course; it is not often you ask me, I'm sure. What is it I can do?'

'I have found a woman dangerously ill, who will die without help. Will you come and see what can be

done—whether she cannot be removed to some shelter where she can have medical assistance? Pray make haste. Your horse will stand, will he not?'

Mr. Spindler drew horse and gig precipitately to one side. 'Stand? I dare say he would; but to tell you the plain truth, Lady Adelaide, I don't seem to care to try. A woman dangerously ill, forsooth! a tramp with an infectious fever, enough to poison the whole neighbourhood. I wonder your ladyship can be so insanely imprudent, I do indeed! and as to my going near a dirty thief of that kind—'

He jerked the horse's rein; Lady Adelaide ran down the bank to stop him. 'It is a case of life and death —you are not in earnest, Mr. Spindler? You will not leave me?'

'My dear lady, I am exceedingly sorry—shocked beyond expression [moving on in great alarm]; but you really should not come near any one, fresh from the infection. The workhouse or the jail is the proper place for those vile tramps, and I am sure good Mr. Lyndon will agree with me. I dare say she belongs to a gang of them, and they will come back by and bye and look after her, depend upon it, without our risking our lives.'

'And meanwhile she is sinking for want of proper care. For shame, Mr. Spindler! you are a man and a Christian [she could not bring herself to say a gentleman]; you will not allow such cowardly reasons to stop you from an act of humanity that a savage would blush to refuse!'

'Now really, my Lady, really, you are so vehement— I'll just appeal to our good friend behind there, Mr. Randolph! Here he comes. Don't throw away your

cigar, man, whatever you do! It may be the saving of our lives; 'give me one if you have it to spare—nothing like tobacco to keep off infection; my Lady will excuse—thank ye!'

And stooping over the side of the gig, Mr. Spindler lighted the proffered cigar at that of his companion, who held it to him with one hand, while with the other he lifted his hat to Lady Adelaide, with the polite inquiry, if there was anything in which he could be of service?'

Before she had recovered from the trouble into which his unexpected appearance had momentarily thrown her ideas, Mr. Spindler answered for her.

'It's just this, my dear sir [puff, puff], my Lady has found some tramps with a horrid fever, and wants me—*me*, of all people in the world, to go and play nurse, surgeon, or apothecary [puff], I don't know which—thank ye. I am no great smoker, but medicinally, you know [puff]—I can do the thing at a push. Very good cigar too, upon my word. Does your ladyship object to the smell in the open air? No? I am delighted.'

'Well, sir?' said Randolph, as if expecting to hear more.

'Well, sir, what would you have? I object, naturally—and then she calls me inhuman—'

'Naturally,' put in Randolph.

'What do you mean? I am proud to oblige her ladyship, as far as I can. If she will condescend to get into my gig, and let *you* drive her home, I don't mind walking, old as I am; and it is but burning the cushions, though maybe fumigating with sulphur might do. I don't care for anything in reason—but as to catching

a fever for the sake of rascally thieves and vagabonds, it is what I don't seem to feel called upon to do. Charity begins at home, you should remember, my Lady.'

'I should,' said Lady Adelaide; 'but I have had cause enough to forget it, heaven knows! You exaggerate the danger, sir—there is no fear of infection, as far as I can judge; the poor woman appears to me to have just shaken off some disorder that has left her in a deplorable state of weakness, increased by neglect, for which nursing and wholesome food may yet be in time to-day—to-morrow it may be too late. You shrug your shoulders, Mr. Spindler; it is no affair of yours, you think. *You* do not know what sickness is in a strange land—and *I* do.'

'So do I,' said Randolph, heartily. 'So now let us come to an understanding, if you please. One of us, Mr. Spindler, must remain to assist Lady Adelaide, and the other go to find a lodging for this poor creature, whoever she may be. You do not seem inclined to remain—will you drive on to Cannymoor, if there is no nearer place, and see what you can do?'

'Humph—well, I don't mind so much about that. I suppose, Lady Adelaide, Mr. Lyndon will have no objection to a bed being made up in his barn?'

Lady Adelaide was obliged to confess, as he was resolved she should, her fear that Mr. Lyndon's dread of infection would not suffer him to permit it for an instant.

'We can readily excuse Mr. Lyndon's anxiety for his heir,' said Randolph, in a conciliatory tone; 'but without annoying him, is there nobody who will let a room for a week or so?'

'To Lady Adelaide, or to you, with pleasure, I am sure; but to a sick gipsy, no, thank you.'

'No farmer that will give one an outhouse, if he is paid for it?'

'Not one of *my* tenants, nor anybody else's, I'll answer for it, that would feel justified in admitting any one with an infectious disorder within their premises; and I shouldn't like to be the one to ask it.'

'Mr. Randolph,' said Lady Adelaide, turning to him for the first time, 'you see now what the charity of Cannymoor is. I think, however, I know one house where this poor woman would be received to oblige me, if we had any means of conveying her there.'

'As to that,' said Mr. Spindler, 'a horse and cart are always to be had for money, except at hay and harvest-time. There is Mullins has one, I know, if it is not engaged.'

'I met it going home full of faggots,' said Lady Adelaide.

'Then I can hire that for you, if you like; but, as Mr. Randolph says, let us come to an understanding in a business-like way. Folks will not put themselves out of their way without being paid, you know, my Lady, and times are hard, they tell me, when I ask for my rents. It is a thing *I* couldn't afford to have anything to do with myself; but with your ladyship it may be different—you will be answerable for all the expense?'

He saw her change countenance, and chuckled inwardly with intense glee. Randolph's purse was half drawn forth, but with a gesture he could not disobey, she arrested the movement, and the words that were on his lips. 'Mr. Spindler has a right to be cautious,' she said, with quiet dignity; 'but I believe I can safely

undertake thus much without hazarding his credit, or encroaching on your politeness, Mr. Randolph—farther than by asking you to give the poor creature the benefit of your medical skill, of which we have heard so much?'

He bowed low, and was following her as she hastened away, when Mr. Spindler called him back to whisper,

'I say, I had her there, hadn't I? Get her pride up, and she will do anything; I know she has not a sixpence to spare, but now she has taken it on herself, she will do it, if she sells the gown off her back. I am safe from *that* risk, whatever I may be from the other.'

'I do not see how you can catch much infection with this keen breeze whistling about your ears,' said Randolph, impatiently, and with difficulty restraining his sensations of disgust. 'Wait here only a few minutes, and I will bring you word what to do.'

Maurice was prepared for a sad sight, but not for so piteous a one as he beheld when he came to the encampment; a thin, wan face, with long, fair hair, tangled and matted, escaping from under an old rag of a dirty yellow handkerchief, knotted under her chin, making the ghastly cheeks look ghastlier still—large, hollow grey eyes—lips parched and black, through which the faint breath came in painful gasps, as if each must be the last: an unclean, wretched, hopeless object, such as he had never approached on British soil, and at whose aspect he involuntarily recoiled. But the head had now found a pillow, and that pillow was the arm of a pitying woman, whose voice, as he came near, was soothing her terrors, and explaining that the gentleman was clever and kind, and coming only as a friend.

'Is he a friend of yours?' murmured the vagrant.

'No,' was the quiet reply, 'he is not a friend of mine, but he is anxious to be a friend to you, and he will tell us what to do. Do not be afraid—I shall not leave you; you can rest on my shoulder, and he will feel your pulse.'

Randolph came to the other side of the sufferer, and looking as professional as he could, put a question or two, observed her with much attention, and then taking a tiny phial out of his case, put some globules into her mouth according to rule; a proceeding which seemed to astound Lady Adelaide as much as it did the patient. This done, he beckoned her aside. She laid the woman gently down, and obeyed. At that moment they were physician and nurse, and nothing else.

'That poor thing wants nourishment.'

'I know she does, but I have not been able to find anything here to give her. The little one says there was some left for them, but "Ally" had it all. There was a girl lounging about a little while ago, but she ran away when I beckoned, and has not returned.'

'How long have you been here?' asked Randolph, gently.

'An hour, I believe—it seemed much longer. Never mind me; what do you advise?'

'First, that we send off our liberal friend in the gig. Where is he to go for lodgings?'

Lady Adelaide took a leaf out of her pocket-book, and wrote a few lines. 'The old man has a room in his cottage that he never uses, but he has rejected all lodgers hitherto. However, to oblige me, I think he will break through his rule. There is more goodness of heart about him than his neighbours believe; and

at any rate, his fear will not be a hindrance, for he fears nothing.'

'Nothing?' repeated Randolph, shaking his head.

'Nothing on this side of the grave. On the other he fears too much, and Cannymoor charity takes him at his own valuation. Do not believe all you hear, sir, or you may be led into great injustice unintentionally.'

'I find so, in more cases than one,' said he, gravely; and hurried away to his friend.

'Mr. Spindler, Lady Adelaide requests you will drive as fast as you can to Cannymoor—hire the cart you talked of, and send it with a mattress and blankets directly. Here is your authority for securing a lodging.'

Curiosity overcoming fear, Mr. Spindler took the slip of paper without hesitation, and read it eagerly.

'Whew,' whistled he, 'Sergeant Wade! the old curmudgeon that nobody is allowed to go near! He has never let me into his house since he went into it.'

'Try what Lady Adelaide's name will do, at any rate. She makes as sure of his readiness to oblige her as of yours.'

'She is vastly condescending, upon my word! Is there anything else she is pleased to want while she is about it?'

'Yes, I see the very thing she wants most—Miss Chatterley will excuse our robbing her storeroom for a day or two;' and he sprang into the carriage, and began to fill his pockets with booty. 'Arrowroot, just the thing, and a few of these rusks—an orange or two—capital; I won't keep you a minute, my dear sir, I assure you.'

'I won't keep *you*, you mean,' gasped Mr. Spindler,

in great dismay; 'take anything you please, so long as you account to Susan for it all—I wash my hands of it, only get out of my gig. Take her ladyship's letter with you, and here,' as Randolph, with his hands full, was turning away, 'I must add my mite—you need not come nearer—hold out your hand.'

Randolph, expecting a sovereign at least, thrust the letter into his coat-pocket with other things, and skilfully caught the gift flung to him—a hard biscuit. He very nearly bowled it back again into the gig, but Mr. Spindler had already pushed on, and it was not worth while to quarrel with him.

As he returned, he heard Lady Adelaide calling him. He flew to the spot; she was kneeling to support the wretched stranger, and one glance at the livid face resting against her shoulder, accounted for the alarm and distress painted on her own. There was indeed no time to be lost, but Maurice spoke cheerfully, and the sight of the food he had brought relieved Adelaide in part of the terror that had seized her, lest the woman should expire under her hands before help could arrive. Her eyes thanked him gratefully, and not daring to quit her post in the exhausted condition of her charge, she watched, half sadly, half amused, the energetic proceedings of Maurice Randolph, as with all the skill of a backwoodsman, he revived the smouldering fire, boiled the black kettle, and fell to work cooking with a tin can and a horn spoon as busy as any old nurse. The little girl, attracted by the blaze, came running to warm her hands, and to whimper her complaints of being '*so* hungry.' 'Come,' thought Maurice, 'Mr. Spindler's charity is more to the purpose than I thought;' and he gave her the biscuit;

but before she had half devoured it, the remainder was snatched from her hands, and Randolph, turning at her cry, saw a wild-looking elf, with long black hair, standing grinning defiance at him and her.

The woman and her little one were evidently mere wanderers, probably fallen from a respectable position; but this was a gipsy born and bred, olive-tinted, dark-eyed, and villanously precocious in the hardihood and cunning of the features. Her eyes glanced curiously over his person, then over that of the kneeling lady; and after a minute's hesitation, she seated herself by the fire, and coolly munched the biscuit she had seized, her white teeth gleaming whenever she stopped to grin, which was pretty often.

'You are a cool hand, certainly,' said Maurice.

She nodded, and made a grimace like a baboon.

'Is that poor woman related to you?'

A shake of the head, and another contortion expressive of contempt.

'Why are you left with her, then? To take care of her?'

A shrug of the shoulders, and a wide, malicious grin.

'A pretty creature you must be, to see a poor soul sinking, and a little one hungry, and think only of yourself! I know those who, if they knew it, would make you remember it too—ah, I do, for all your grimacing. Don't you hear how she is crying now?'

She turned her head sulkily in that direction, but made no answer, and he had no more time to bestow upon her; for the roaring of the child as it ran to its mother, had roused her from her stupor, only to bring on a state of agitation that was more alarming still. Lady Adelaide attempted to soothe them both in vain,

and her warm expression of thankfulness, when Randolph ran to them with the can of arrowroot he had so skilfully prepared in defiance of difficulties, sent a thrill to his heart, that he would have found it rather hard work to explain.

It was a singular thing to see those two, with the broad gulf between their hearts, bridged over, as it were, for the moment, by an impulse of Christian charity towards a third party, a stranger to them both. No one who had seen how carefully and gently they tended her, how anxiously they watched as she slowly and painfully swallowed the food Lady Adelaide administered, how they looked at each other for sympathy or counsel, and read every glance and sign like old and intimate friends—would have believed *how* they had recently met after nearly eleven years' separation. Unawares to herself, a sense of protection and support in the presence of that strong will and clear judgment, stole over the spirits of Adelaide Lyndon, so long accustomed to think and act for others, or to be harassed by opinions on which she could not rely. She had no time now to analyse the sensation, to discover how it was that, instead of the bitter sarcastic censor she had shrunk from encountering again, she seemed suddenly to have found, as though risen from the dead, the lost friend of earlier days. She was not even conscious that it was so; still less how, at every gentle word, every sweet smile, every tender and considerate action that revealed her better nature, that passionate heart was beating again with the pulses of its youth—as if those long years of resentment and absence were but a dream of yesterday.

The child having received a share of the food, left

off fretting, and ran off to play; the warm nourishment wonderfully revived the poor mother, and she was able to look up in Lady Adelaide's face, and bless her for her goodness. The tears stood in her eyes as she did so; it was so long, she said, since she had heard a kind word from a lady, and she had thought she never should again. 'I was not always such a miserable object as I am now, ma'am—oh no, no! but it was my own doing—my own doing. You don't know what a poor lost creature you are touching, dear lady, not fit for such an angel to come near. Oh, sir, you won't let me be taken up, will you? I wouldn't be a vagrant if I could help it; and I have been so ill, and what will become of my poor little one?'

Randolph assured her she should be molested by nobody; their intentions were all in kindness, but nothing should be done without her consent. Would she object to being taken to a lodging, which the lady had sent to prepare for her, and being nursed there quietly, till she was strong enough to think about doing something for herself? Object? it sounded like a paradise to the poor wanderer, who, it was but too evident, was quite unfitted to bear the exposure and hardship of her vagrant life. She kissed Lady Adelaide's hand, murmuring blessings and thanks.

'Oh! to sleep on a bed with a Christian roof over my head again!' she murmured. 'I was born and bred respectable, ma'am, and in the fear of God. I was indeed, though so wretched now; and had schooling too, and have had good places in gentlemen's families. Oh dear, dear, dear! it was all my own doing, ma'am—my own doing!'

'Ah,' said Adelaide, mildly, 'there are few of us who

may not say the same of all our troubles; let who will be hard upon us, we have generally ourselves to blame. But take courage, we will hope your worst days are over; and when you have regained your strength, who knows but that you may redeem the time, and become as respectable and respected as you say your parents were—as you wish your little one to be?'

'God bless you, ma'am, for saying so; it is too late for me, but if you can save *her* from becoming what I am, I'll bless you with my last breath. There's one of my burdens at least that she'll not have to bear, poor lamb—and that has been the heaviest of all—yes, it has.'

'And what was that?' asked Lady Adelaide, who thought the kindest thing to do was to encourage her to relieve her poor burdened heart; though Randolph, in his medical capacity, shook his head, and wished she would keep quiet. This seemed impossible; she clung to Lady Adelaide, and with a voice broken by her sobs and feeble breath, poured out the tale of her woes—one, alas! too often told.

She had fallen into bad company while in service, and formed an engagement with a young man, connected, as she afterwards found, with a gang of professed thieves. He had persuaded her to rob her mistress; she did it at first, she said, only to get out of debt, which she had run into for smart clothes; but having done it once with impunity, it was easy to tempt her again. The second time she was detected and sent to jail. Yes, the dear lady was holding up the head of a thief who had been in prison, and who, after she came out, had lived among them ever since 'And it wasn't my wish to do it, ma'am—oh no, it wasn't! The kind gentleman, the chaplain at Y——

jail, told me if I repented heartily I should be forgiven, and have grace to begin afresh, and lead a new life; and I did repent—yes, indeed I did. I would have given the whole world to begin afresh, as he said; but oh, ma'am, when I came out, nobody would give me a chance, nobody would trust me, or give me work, or try me in any way—and what could I do?'

The result was that she married her former tempter, and as he was, with all his faults, kinder to her in the main than some honester men might have been, deplorable as was their way of subsistence, she wanted for nothing while he lived. Since his death, left without health, character, or money, what she had gone through no one could tell, least of all herself. In the course of the dreadful winter, she had fallen in with some gipsies who had been her husband's friends, and her only resource against starvation had been to join them. 'They were kind to me, ma'am, in their way—there's good and bad among 'em—and I thought it didn't much matter where I ended my days now, and that I shouldn't care how soon; but when I was took downright ill, it did seem dreadful to die like that—dreadful! However, I got better, and they brought me along with them as far as here, and then I was so weak, they left me to go to the next town; and after they were gone, and no one was near but those children—oh, ma'am, when I heard your sweet voice asking what you could do for me, it sounded like an angel from heaven in my extremity, it did—for everything seemed to be passing away from me, and I couldn't pray. I knew He would not hear me—my mother told me that long ago.'

'Your *mother?*' said Lady Adelaide.

'Ah, yes, ma'am. She is a great deal better than I, such a wonderful good woman! If I had only obeyed her always, and kept out of gay company, I should have been a different creature now; but I would go my own way, and please myself, and she told me what it would come to, and that she would never own me again if I once disgraced her—and I have. The kind gentleman at the jail did write to ask if she would take me in when my time was out; but no answer ever came, and I durstn't write myself, or go. And now, whenever I have tried to pray—and oh, how I have longed to hear a word of prayer!—I seemed to hear her telling me, as she did the last time I saw her, that I was a castaway and a child of wrath; and I could not find a word to say. Oh! it has been my worst trouble all along, that anger of my mother's; for I felt God would never forgive me till she did. Whatever my poor Betsy may do to me, I'll try hard to spare her *that*. But now, perhaps—' she looked wistfully in Lady Adelaide's face, and saw her eyes full of tears; 'perhaps *you*, ma'am, who look so kind, and are so good and so pure—*you* wouldn't mind putting up a bit of a prayer for a poor lost creature. I am sure He would hear *you*, and then, maybe—'

Her voice and strength failed, and she lay with the tears trickling down her cheeks, her hollow, imploring eyes continuing the supplication that she had not power to utter. Lady Adelaide, wrung to the core, feeling it cruel to refuse, and impossible to comply, in her turn looked beseechingly at Randolph. Sad and humble was the language of that look, and it drooped before his as he had never seen it yet.

Right well did he read its meaning. He, too, was

moved by the piteous appeal of the object of his charity, but there were few good offices he would not rather have been asked to render. A sense of shame and embarrassment darkened the brown of his cheek, as the conviction forced itself on his conscience that, with all his knowledge of books and the world—all his self-reliance, his abilities, his traveller's experience—when a perishing fellow-being called on him for a word of spiritual consolation, he actually knew not what to say.

Yet he was one whose reason, whose intellectual powers, were all on the side of truth. He could own and admire the traces of the great Designer in the wonders of creation, and acknowledge the force of the evidence heaped together in behalf of revealed religion. His sense and judgment told him that piety was wisdom; he reverenced all that he saw pure, and lovely, and of good report; nothing was wanting to his Christianity, but that it should be *practical*. And when *that* is wanting, in the hour of fear or grief, miserable comforters are all the rest! He saw this now, perhaps for the first time; at any rate, more distinctly than he had ever done before, and it by no means added to his composure. He was beginning to murmur some excuse, when the poor woman, thinking, from their hesitation, they both considered her too bad to pray for, burst into tears, and clasping her wasted hands, sobbed out that her mother was right; nobody could or would say a word for a poor lost creature, when she was dying under God's curse and hers. And then came a cry of despair, and Lady Adelaide's face grew pale as ashes.

'Hush, hush!' she said, in agitation she could not

control, 'poor thing, poor thing! Yes, we will—here, I am kneeling by you, I know what your grief is, I have shared it—I share it still. Send up your poor heart to God—He is more merciful than man—He is all goodness—all mercy—He will hear us both;' and she did make the attempt, but the words died on her lips; and Randolph, roused by the sight of her distress, began what constant repetition happily renders so familiar to the memory, that no Churchman need ever be at a loss for words—the Confession in the Liturgy.

He chose this as being the first that occurred to him at the moment; but as the sentences came slowly and emphatically forth, their eloquent beauty, so appropriate and so comprehensive, struck them all as they never had before. Randolph's strong voice trembled, and his eyes grew moist, as he uttered the petition so expressive of the soul's deepest wants, 'Spare thou them, O God, that confess their faults; restore thou them that are penitent!' The unhappy outcast, so long cut off from public ordinances and means of grace, followed every word with avidity, as if each was a life-giving drop to her thirsting spirit. Lady Adelaide's head sank lower and lower, and silently and fast fell her tears. Who could read the secrets of those three hearts, or tell what it was the still small voice was saying to each?—the voice so often stifled, that yet will find moments and occasions to speak—whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear!

The silence that followed was first broken by a cry from the child. She had forgotten her troubles in playing with the old donkey; and Ally the gipsy, tired of having no mischief to do, had amused herself by teasing them both, which teasing had progressed into

beating. The donkey being used to it, took it philosophically; but the child, secure of sympathy, roared louder perhaps than there was absolute occasion for, which soon brought Randolph to the rescue. Catching the elf by her long black locks, he dragged her without ceremony to the bedside, and asked her in threatening terms how she dared behave so? The poor woman said she was a hard little creature, and a cruel—she wouldn't even give her a drop of water to drink, and treated her poor Betsy shameful—she did. In reply to this, the girl poured out a volley of abuse that made the invalid cower under her blankets, and the child run for protection to Lady Adelaide. A smart box on the ear from Mr. Randolph cut short this display of eloquence, but excited her passion to a fearful degree. With eyes glaring like a little tiger cat, she seemed in the act of making a spring, when a few sharp stern words in the gipsy dialect stopped her. The effect was instantaneous; the demoniacal expression relaxed, and her voice became the true Romany whine.

'What a clever, learned gentleman! he can talk like the poor gipsies, so he can; and he is almost a gipsy himself, with his dark hair and nut-brown skin. What a happy lady *his* lady will be! Please to give the poor gipsy girl a sixpence, for the good news she could tell you if you crossed her hand!'

'*I* give thee sixpence? Take care how you cross *my* hand again, that is all. My fortune was told me long ago.'

The girl laughed loudly, and clapped her hands over her head.

'And did they tell the brown gentleman what the gipsy girl could tell him? Did he know about the

handsome lady with dark eyes, who loves the very ground he treads upon? Oh! did they tell him that? Yes, yes, the gipsy girl knows what she knows, and she could show him what *they* couldn't; how the handsome lady could blush when he was talked about—for all the world like a sunrise when you are going to have a precious stormy day!'

An involuntary impulse, regretted as soon as followed, turned Randolph's eyes on Lady Adelaide Lyndon. She was indeed blushing deeply; but the instant she saw him observe it, the glow grew deeper still. She rose from her position by the sick bed, her whole bearing suddenly transformed; and a great deal more scorn looked beautiful in the contempt and anger of her lip than Maurice at all liked, as she requested he would be good enough to carry on the discussion a little further off, where it could not disturb the poor woman under their care.

He stood motionless—stung with the maddening thoughts that rushed upon him in a moment.

'Yes, yes, my handsome gentleman, take the lady's advice; you will be sorry enough by and by that you gave the gipsy girl knocks instead of fair words—ay, ay, you will, maybe before the sun goes down. One little sixpence, my noble gentleman, just for the sake of the beautiful lady that looks so kind at you, and loves you so true!'

'I'll break every bone in your skin, you saucy imp!' cried he, turning upon her in intense wrath; but she was too quick for him this time—darted under his arm, and in spite of a vigorous chase, escaped out of his reach; the echo of her jeering laugh ringing in the distance, as if to aggravate his mortification.

'But it is as well—quite as well—' he muttered, as he came slowly back, and cast one glance at the form near the bed, that so short a time before had been bending with him in prayer; 'a little more, and I should have forgotten all, and become again the blind fool I was once. I am once more myself; that scornful look has made a man of me—thanks for your gentle service, gipsy girl!'

Alas! he little knew the mischief she had done—and was yet to do.

CHAPTER IX.

The sickening pang of hope deferred.
SCOTT.

THE benevolent feelings of Mr. Spindler, when he found himself actually employed in a work of disinterested charity that was to cost him nothing, were of an enviable description; and like all amiable qualities, constituted in themselves their own reward. After making a bargain for the cart and horse, and the mattress and blankets, in which not a peg was left for the most astute manager to hang a liability on against himself—and despatching the conveyance to the quarry, with a hint about Mr. Randolph's liberality to those who served him well;—after doing this, and stopping occasionally to tell the whole story to everybody, gentle or simple, whom he chanced to meet, he turned his horse's unwilling head from the direction of his stable, to the cottage of Sergeant Wade, on the moor. It was an errand that besides its benevolence gratis, possessed the attraction of gratifying a very reasonable curiosity; for in spite of numerous attempts, never once had he been admitted inside the mysterious old man's premises. As he drove up, he saw Stephen Ball lounging over his father's gate, and beckoned him to hold

the horse. Stephen came reluctantly, doubtful of recompence, and murmuring something about being busy.

'Busy, are you, my man? Well, I will tell her ladyship I called you from your work, and she will remember you. All well at home?'

'Oh, ah, pretty middlin,' said Stephen. '*I'm* quite well.'

'That's right; then you won't be alarmed if you hear of putrid fever in the neighbourhood, I dare say. It is not always catching, and when it is, people don't always die.'

'I say—' began Stephen, uneasily.

'No, don't blame me; *I* have nothing to do with it. I am only here to oblige my friend Lady Adelaide Lyndon, and to render a poor woman a service, which we must always be ready to do, Stephen, you know. There, hold your tongue, for I am in a hurry to see old Wade.'

'Hurry or no hurry, you'll be like to wait a bit,' quoth Stephen.

He stood grinning as Mr. Spindler, unfastening the gate with some difficulty, began to knock at the door; he knew how long he might do that without being attended to, and as there was nothing particular to knock with, it was an amusement of which people soon grew tired. Mr. Spindler, however, was not easily daunted. When his knuckles had had enough of it, he tried what kicking would do, and then fetched the gig whip, and plied the handle vigorously, and shook the door till it rattled again—all to no purpose.

'Is the old curmudgeon stone deaf, Stephen, or do you think he is away from home?'

'Not he, sir; he's just sittin' in his chair, a-makin' game of you, I'll be bound. It's just *nuts* to him to hear you, it is.'

'Nuts, is it? I'll try and crack them for him, then. I'll be even with him yet for his insolence, if I once get his cottage into my hands. Here!' roaring at the top of his voice. 'Wade! Sergeant! Sergeant Wade! Hill-o-a! House! I want to *speak* with you. I come on particular *business!* Sergeant Wade! *Wade!* W-a-d-e!'

All the Ball family, attracted by the noise, came out, baby and all, to see what was going on. Enraged at his failure before so many spectators, Abel renewed his assault upon the churlish door, and at last with deserved success; for as he was in the act of rushing against it with all his might, it suddenly opened, and he fell head foremost into the arms of a tall old man, with a shaggy beard, and general expression inhospitable, not to say unpleasantly threatening.

Before Mr. Spindler could recover himself from the affectionate attitude so unwittingly assumed, this gaunt figure had very coolly possessed himself of the gig whip; then with the other hand laying hold of his visitor, he held him at arm's length, with the stern inquiry, 'Now, sir, what is the meaning of all this?'

'What indeed?' panted Mr. Spindler, in great wrath; 'what do *you* mean by treating gentlemen like this, keeping them outside your door like dogs, hammering till they are stiff in the joints, and bawling at you till they are hoarse? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!'

'Ought I?' said the old man, relinquishing his hold, and eyeing him from head to foot; 'very well, sir; then I will.' And he drew back as if to shut the door, but

Mr. Spindler caught his sleeve. 'What do you want, sir?'

The question was so menacing that the answer came rather in a flurry. 'Why, sergeant, I understand you have a room to let.'

'No, I have not, sir. Good morning.'

'Stop, stop, stop! I don't mean that, but you have a room to spare.'

'I choose to live by myself, sir, thank you; so—'

'Well, but hear a man speak, can't you, before you slam your door in his face? It is a case of charity, this is—a poor woman without a home.'

'Indeed, sir? Then the best thing you can do is to take care of her yourself. I have a notion your house is bigger than mine.'

'My house? yes, of course it is; but don't you see, it is a bad case from a gipsy camp—fever, I believe—and you are here, only a single man. You should be accommodating and neighbourly.'

The old man's eyes lighted up fiercely under his shaggy brows. 'I tell ye, I'm neighbour to none of ye—none! I want nothing, I ask nothing of any one of ye, and I mean to do nothing for *you*. You are a set of prying, lying, interfering, tattling busybodies, man, woman, and child, that I wouldn't let cross my threshold, if I were dying! Go—I have nothing to do with you, nor you with me—' And with the whip ominously ready in his hand, he made a step forward, that rendered a backward one on the part of his visitor a matter of necessity. Out of all patience, Mr. Spindler turned to Stephen in great dudgeon, exclaiming, 'What could Lady Adelaide Lyndon mean by sending me to be insulted by such a churlish old fellow as this?'

'Lady Adelaide Lyndon?' repeated the sergeant, in an altered tone.

'Yes, to be sure; a very particular friend of mine, who asked me as a great favour to come to you, or I am sure I should not have given myself all this trouble. But I shall tell her how I was received. I'll trouble you to give me my whip.'

Sergeant Wade made a stride in advance, took Mr. Spindler by the arm, and put him into the house as if he had been a doll. 'Now, sir, if you please—Lady Adelaide's orders.'

'These are the only orders I have received. If they are not satisfactory, don't blame me. Mind! I have nothing to do with the rent—you must settle that with her.'

The sergeant put on a large pair of horn spectacles, and carefully perused the torn scrap of paper offered him, on which was hurriedly written, 'If Sergeant Wade can spare his empty room for a short time to a sick woman and her child, he will greatly oblige Lady Adelaide Lyndon.' 'Very well, sir,' said he, as he locked the document up in a small iron box, evidently containing his treasures: 'her ladyship shall be obeyed. Is that all?'

'Well, about all, I believe,' said Mr. Spindler, trying to be easy and chatty, and eyeing the room with much curiosity. 'A snug little tenement this, eh? You rent it of old Diggles, don't you? Ay, ay, he owns one or two of the cottages about, and a precious close fist you find him, no doubt. Now *my* tenants—'

'I ask no favour of any one, sir—unless it be that they will let me alone.'

'Quite right, quite right. A respectable man never should ask favours—especially of his landlord. And

you have made it look quite barrack like, with that rolled-up bed, and all your traps in such order. Why, you must almost expect to hear the bugle call for parade at six in the morning, eh?'

It had, indeed, quite a soldierly appearance, this room where the moody old man passed his nights and days. There were pegs, and racks, and shelves, put up by his own hands, for holding everything in its proper place; his cooking utensils shone like silver; his floor was scrupulously clean: a few books, carefully preserved, their bindings evidently mended by himself, were on a chest; and one of these, the visitor saw at a glance, was a Bible.

'Why, sergeant, you are a reader, I see—and of *that* book, too! Your neighbours all declare you do not believe in it!

'Perhaps they say I don't use *that*, either,' said the old soldier, grimly, with a gesture of his thumb at a bayonet that hung over his chimney. 'Yet I could, if I thought it of any use.'

'Well, but my good friend, you are a Christian I hope?'

'Why, sir? Are *you?*'

'Of course I am. What did you think I was?'

'*Think* you were? A Mammon worshipper—that's what *you* are.'

'Eh, eh—what?' stammered Mr. Spindler, considerably taken aback.

'What? don't you know what that means, sir? You, a gentleman and educated, that take pleasure in giving good advice to the poor, if you give them nothing else? Look ye, man! I warn ye, don't come with your advice and your teaching to me. For every text

you could quote, I could give you a dozen. I knew that Book as soon as you did, and maybe before; and if I would—and often I would—forget it, I can't. And I know what is said there of lip-service, and loving the world, and of the snare into which they fall who *will* be rich; ay, and that he who makes haste about it will hardly be innocent. I know all about it, sir, and more than you might like to hear—and it is my curse that I do—as it will one day be *yours!*'

'Upon my word, I had better go,' thought our friend Abel, moving to the door; 'but there is one thing I must find out first, come what may.' 'I am going, sergeant—I don't want to intrude upon you. You admit ladies, I suppose, to see you—Lady Adelaide is often here, I think?'

'Sir, some ladies took the trouble of coming several times to tell me I must go to church, and I must read their books; and to ask me a great many questions about my ways and means of living, which they would have thought very impertinent if I had asked *them*. I told them, once for all, I liked to be left to myself, and I kept them out ever after. My Lady comes as politely as if she were calling on a general, and never interferes about my habits, nor gives me one word of advice that I don't ask for, nor does a thing she wouldn't do in the house of the first lord of the land: and she is a *real* lady, sir, and has seen service, and done it too, in her time; and it is an honour to me, when she condescends to set foot inside my door. Her orders shall be obeyed about the room; and with your leave, it is time for me to see about getting it ready.'

And with that, he quietly put his visitor out, as easily as he had taken him in.

Mr. Spindler got into his gig in rather a spiteful frame of mind. Stephen touched his cap insinuatingly. 'Queer customer that 'ere, sir—you managed him at last, though. Please to remember me, sir—'

'With great pleasure, my dear young friend; your countenance is too striking to be forgotten. Thank ye, good afternoon!'

'Not a sixpence, sir?' persisted Stephen.

'Sixpence, eh! Very sorry, but no change. I'll tell my Lady, though—it is entirely her affair, bringing sick gipsies into the place. Take care of your little ones, Mrs. Ball, I advise you: it may be scarlet fever, or typhus, for all I know.'

With which consolatory remark, he drove away, leaving consternation and wrath behind him.

Luckily for all parties, the next person he met was Dr. Home, to whom the news had just come in a very garbled state, and who was on his way to ascertain the real state of the case. As soon as he heard Mr. Spindler's version, in which he took most of the credit to himself, he shook him heartily by the hand, with much praise for his kindness—received by that gentleman with becoming modesty—and declared he should send Colly at once to Sergeant Wade's. 'Colly makes friends with everybody: I defy even that crabbed old bit of pipe-clay to quarrel with her; and she knows everybody, and will find some one to go as nurse, I dare say. She shall take a supply of comforts; we will not let the work you have begun so well fall to the ground—depend upon it, Spindler. *That* is the way to invest your money—for it brings a sure return!'

'Eh, eh? yes, very true—but, Doctor, one word! I have entered into no engagement—I am not responsible

to anybody for anything; mind that. It is not my way. What I give, I give, and it is nobody's affair whether it be much or little—and I don't mind trouble or fatigue, as you see, to do a kindness: but as an old man of business, I never take any responsibilities—they would only harass me. Your rich friend Mr. Randolph, and her ladyship, are the parties you must look to, do you hear?'

'Oh—!' was all Dr. Home's reply, as he turned upon his heel, and Mr. Spindler, rejoicing in his dexterity, drove on to the Manorhouse, to disburden his mind of intelligence and his pocket of letters.

The colouring he gave to his story there, was possibly intended as a return to the fair widow for the trouble she had given him. When Lady Adelaide, after seeing her charges safely housed, with Colly looking after them, arrived at home, not a little fatigued, she was received with a storm of reproaches and precautionary measures. One wanted to fumigate her with hot vinegar—another begged her to stand in a thorough draught for half an hour: there was more than one hint thrown out of her keeping her room until the medical man could be fetched from Shareham; and it was only by dint of urgent and repeated remonstrance, that she was permitted to compromise the matter by changing her dress, and submitting to a plentiful sprinkling of camphorated spirits. This Penelope administered herself, with a grimly conspicuous look of resignation as one who knew the risk she ran, and was resolved everybody else should know it too.

'No, my dear Adelaide,' when her sister-in-law begged her not to trouble herself, 'if you, at your age, *will* do such wild, not to say wicked things, it is for *me*

to see that nobody suffers from them. I know my duty, and shall do it, though I get no thanks.'

Lady Adelaide, too weary to argue the point, went on dressing in silence; thankful that nothing worse than camphor was being showered so liberally on her unfortunate tweed cloak. Miss Lyndon continued her lecture with her precautions.

'I shall do my duty, I hope, *always*, thank you, Adelaide—whatever may be the risk. I should consider it very foolish, very wrong, to run into danger unnecessarily, and expose others to it, just to gratify my own desire for notoriety or excitement; but where it comes in the way of *duty*, I can face it, I hope, as well as another. I must say, I think you might have considered my father a little, knowing, as you do, how fearful he is of infection. I mentioned it to you before you went out, if you remember—which, I suppose, was the reason you did it.'

'I am very sorry,' said Lady Adelaide, overwhelmed with all these accusations, 'very sorry to give trouble and cause anxiety; but you would have done the same in my place—anybody would.'

'Don't talk to me; I am as compassionate as most people—but I do not go about picking up gipsies in fevers and small-pox, to bring infection home. Have I not heard you refuse fifty times to visit our poor folks, and say that their own neighbours could nurse them better than we could? And then you go making yourself conspicuous by doing so mad a thing as this! I have no patience with you, I declare!'

Miss Lucy, who came in, armed with a basin of disinfecting fluid, followed on the same side.

'Gracious, my dear, how could you?—but it was all

meant for the best, I dare say, all your kindness, and dear good Mr. Spindler's too—what a good-natured man he is! I always say he would do anybody for anything—anything for anybody, I mean; it was all his consideration for us, bringing us the news, and frightening us all out of our wits; he seemed quite wretched about you, and my father was like a distracted creature at the very idea, and I'm sure I don't know what we should have done if you had not come home soon. I thought I should have dropped flat on the floor, and it was a mercy I recollected I had a cup and saucer in my hand, as it might be this basin now. Where shall it stand, Adelaide dear? I don't know exactly what you are to do with it, but everybody says it is a very fine thing. And now do tell me all your adventures from the very beginning, about dear Mr. Randolph and all; because when you begin to get feverish, you know, you will not be allowed to talk.'

The dinner-bell happily saved her sister-in-law from the necessity of complying, and all Lucy could do was to insist on giving her the support of her arm down-stairs, which as she was short and Adelaide was tall, was being more attentive than useful.

'Come, my dear, how do you feel now? Only a little tired? Not too much so to enjoy our nice little rubber as usual? That's right; for between ourselves, we ought to be particularly happy and cheerful to-night, as I am sure papa has had disagreeable news; he has been out of sorts ever since he got that letter this afternoon, and Pen thinks the same, only she won't own it.'

'A letter? has the post come in, then?'

'Oh no, it is too soon; but good Mr. Spindler

called at the post-office, and brought us ours. There were none for anybody but my father.'

Adelaide sighed with disappointment, and found it rather difficult to take the hint about happiness and cheerfulness, especially as Mr. Lyndon was in one of his most trying moods; so that it required all the patience she could muster to bear the manner in which he persisted in considering her an invalid—of that peculiar disorder, for which no name has ever been discovered by the faculty, but whose treatment consists in never being allowed to do a single thing in peace. If she went near the fire, it would make her feverish; if near the door, she would give herself a chill; want of appetite was an infallible symptom of approaching indisposition, and everything at table was just the very worst thing she could touch. The evening was varied by light skirmishes with and about Walter, who being told not to keep so close to his mamma, and already in a state of mutiny from the loss of his walk to the quarry, was perpetually turning up at her elbow when she least expected it; and she was worried at last into despatching him to bed, with only Aunt Lucy to put out his candle. This being the height of insult, a pitched battle on the landing was the consequence; and it was not till Lucy had retreated in breathless discomfiture, grandpapa had thundered from the bottom of the stairs, and Aunt Penelope nearly reached the top—that a compromise was effected, by his blowing his candle out in her face, and scrambling into bed in the dark. All this, of course, materially improved the spirits of the company in general; and in short, Mr. Lyndon, though he never actually scolded his daughter-in-law, took care she should do sufficient penance for

her transgression, to deter her from ever committing it again. Indeed, she might have been tempted to wish she had let her work of charity alone, if the night had not proved so wet and stormy, that the thought of the poor woman and her child, safely housed, was the best consolation she could have had under the vexations and disappointment of the day.

Nobody, who has ever noticed—and who has not?—the wonderful property a story possesses of growing, as it moves in a given circle, will be surprised to hear that Cannymoor, gentle and simple, was, for the next six-and-thirty hours at least, in a complete ferment of terror and wrath. That a gang of gipsies with putrid fever had been brought into the village, was the mildest form of the report that caused many a sleepless night, and spoiled half the breakfasts in the place. Miss Chatterley was in immense request, as being in possession of Mr. Spindler's private opinion; and that was so decidedly unfavourable, that what the inquirers lost in facts, was fully made up in dreary prognostications. Everybody agreed it was, to say the least of it, a most unjustifiable, unpardonable, insane proceeding, and that the neighbourhood ought to take some decided step before the consequences spread any farther. And so it fell out, that about the same time that Mrs. Ball, in one of her worst 'historical fits,' as Colly called them, was pouring out her fears and resentment at the rectory, and getting a pungent lecture and three globules in a wine-glassful of water from Mr. Randolph for her pains—a deputation of the most nervous of the ladies waited on Miss Lyndon, to give vent to their terrors, and receive the balm of her sympathy and advice.

Very summarily did Penelope dispose of the matter.

She had so thoroughly relieved her own feelings the evening before, that she was now quite ready to pooh-pooh those of other people. The whole affair had been exaggerated; it was nothing to make a fuss about, only some people could never be content with doing kindnesses at home quietly, but must go hunting up extraordinary objects of charity to make pets of, and attract everybody's notice. She was not prepared to say there was no risk of fever, as those low people were never safe or agreeable neighbours; but she washed her hands of it. It was entirely her sister's affair; a sudden fit of goodness, that must have its course, and to which everything else must give place, while it lasted. She was sorry they had frightened themselves for nothing; but they need only keep away from the cottage, as they always had done, and she confessed she could not conceive that much harm could happen to them.

The deputation, comforted a little by this, ventured to inquire, if it was true that her ladyship had resolved to settle the poor creatures in Cannymoor, that she might devote herself entirely to the reformation and maintenance of the woman, and the education of the child? Miss Lyndon had heard nothing of it, and wondered at any one who had not more sense than to believe such stuff. In the first place, her sister had not the patience; and in the second, she had not the means. 'Don't flatter yourselves,' was her parting benediction, 'that you will not be called upon to contribute, every one of you; for I can tell you, none of *us* have any money to spare, and Adelaide least of all.'

This was a new feature of the business; and though it startled at first, it gradually assumed a more popular

aspect. As the fear of the ladies diminished, their regard for their own importance and dignity returned; and it began to strike them all, that their experience in benevolent undertakings, as a body, was held much too cheaply in this matter; they ought to have been consulted and applied to, before any new pensioner was brought into the place in that thoughtless kind of way; Mr. Randolph must really suppose the ladies of Cannymoor were just nobody at all. However, they must be appealed to soon, and then they would express their opinion; Lady Adelaide would, of course, try and raise a subscription for her *protégées*, and very willing they were to assist, as far as their means allowed, in any good work—but they should feel it their duty to give her a little plain advice, at the same time, about the too little regard she paid to other people. No doubt this would have been extremely wholesome; and so popular became the idea, that if Lady Adelaide had only fulfilled the general expectation, and solicited contributions in person, she would most likely have collected a much larger sum than Dr. Home could ever raise on ordinary occasions. But it was the last thing that would have occurred to her. The very fact of its being a case beyond the jurisdiction of the ladies' committee, was what removed the leading objection she had hitherto felt to cottage visiting. Here was a woman whom nobody would receive, lodging in a house that nobody dared to visit; the spirit of contradiction must have been hard to please indeed, if this offered no inducement. It would be only owning of her what we might always own of ourselves, if we admitted a little mingling of her besetting sin with the energy of her benevolence; but energetic it was, and had need

to be. When she was following the impulse of humanity, she was not at all aware of the heavy responsibility she was undertaking: but neither would she shrink from it afterwards. How the sinews of charity were to be supplied, when her small income was already insufficient, notwithstanding her rigid economy, to satisfy the demands upon it, was a question not to be solved in a hurry; she could only decide that it *should* be done, one way or another, without her being beholden to anybody. Medical advice was procured from Shareham; necessary articles of furniture made the room at Sergeant Wade's wear quite a new aspect; a nurse was provided—the hardest task of all—and a supply of coarse materials were soon in a rapid state of transition into tidy clothes for mother and child. In this last part of the business, Sophy begged hard to take a share; and never felt prouder or happier in her life, than when admitted alone into Lady Adelaide's room, to sit in committee on little Betsy's wardrobe, and feast her eyes unobserved on the beautiful face that was the idolatry of her day dreams. Sitting on a cushion, and sewing up a seam, had never before offered her the attraction intended by the poet; but the grandeur of being in Lady Adelaide's confidence, the felicity of being thanked and praised for her kind help, made it quite another thing; and while emulating, at humble distance, the industry of that quick, determined needle, that seemed to walk the calico like a thing of life, and gallop through hopeless difficulties as if it enjoyed them—she contrived to find resemblances for her companion and herself out of her only novelist, the author of 'Waverley'—till what with Margaret Ramsay with the Lady Hermione, and Catherine Seyton

with Queen Mary, she had herring-boned more romance into little Betsy's flannel petticoat, than has been hammered into many a corslet, or embroidered into many a banner.

Sometimes they walked together to Wade's cottage, and it was balm to Sophy's spirit to see how the poor, languid sufferer's face brightened at the sight of the 'angel of a lady,' how the child crept round her chair to take hold of her dress, or lay a timid finger on her hand; how the crabbed old man, of whom Sophy herself was afraid, and who was more surly than ever since his lodgers came—made a point of opening his door, and inviting my Lady to walk in, though she seldom did. But this was counterbalanced by witnessing how the young Balls were called in by their mother directly she appeared, how sulky Stephen looked if he met her, and how Mrs. Ball herself made a point of talking out loud, though keeping within the shelter of her own gate, about the wickedness of bringing them heathenish gipsy creatures near an honest man's house, to give fevers to his poor innocent children. Why was it, Sophy asked Mr. Randolph, in confidence, that so many people liked finding fault with Lady Adelaide Lyndon, and called her proud, and cold, and unfeeling, when she really was so charming and so good, and made those who *did* love her, love her so very much! Randolph could not say, exactly; but promised to think of it. He encouraged Sophy to continue on the same subject, and she, proud of having anything to tell that could interest anybody so clever, told him all she knew, and a great deal she thought. She described how Lady Adelaide had shown her some of her treasures, that she kept locked up, and only looked at now and then;

the sweetest little cap and frock you ever saw, made for her baby that died in India—some miniatures that had actually been set round with brilliants once—only think of that! and then, some lovely pearls, that she said her mother gave her on the last birthday they were together—and very, very sad she looked when she said so. Sophy had not ventured to ask, but was her mother dead? The real state of the case being briefly explained, she waxed more chivalrous than ever. She should like—yes, that she would—to set off on foot as Elizabeth did in the 'Exiles of Siberia,' and hunt out Lady Delannay, and win her daughter's pardon on her knees. She could not know half that Lady Adelaide had suffered, or she would not be so cruel—oh! if she could only have seen how she looked at the pearls, and said she never could part with *them*, if she gave up everything else!

'And do you know, Mr. Randolph,' gossiped on Sophy, who was at heart much more of a genuine daughter of Cannymoor, than her noble friend was perhaps aware of, 'I am sure they are the only jewels she has; and I suppose she is very poor, for she showed me some beautiful point lace that had been *ever* so long in her family, and worn at court in Mr. Horace Walpole's time, I think she said. Did you ever see Mr. Horace Walpole, Mr. Randolph? I thought you knew everybody. The lace was very valuable, she said, and much too costly for a poor soldier's widow, and she meant to try and dispose of it. But it was quite a secret; so whatever you do, don't let her know I told you.'

She could not quite understand the expression of Mr. Randolph's face when he was listening to all this,

his eyes glittered so strangely—and she made an inward resolution to be more discreet in future. A day or two afterwards, Lady Adelaide happening to be alone with Dr. Home at the Manorhouse, took the opportunity of consulting him on the best method of disposing of some lace in Shareham, without exciting the curiosity of Cannymoor in general, and perhaps causing annoyance at home. She spoke lightly, as if it was comparatively an indifferent matter; but when she put the lace into his hand, he felt hers tremble, and enclosed it in both his own. 'You will not offer a sacrifice that costs you nothing, I see, my dear friend. Ay, ay, there is an adorning, that the holy women of old found more becoming even than the finest needlework on both sides, whatever that may be. They never had anything like this, though,' opening his hands to admire the contents of the parcel; 'I am half afraid to touch it. My poor wife had a little once, and prized it very much; but it was not like this. I warrant now this is a family heirloom, my dear? You must be sorry to give it up.'

'I am,' she said, with a sigh; 'my uncle, General Conway, left it to me, and I can remember it from my childhood, and all the old court traditions connected with it. I am sorry to let it go into strange hands, but, Doctor Home, it is of little consequence as far as I am concerned. The value may be better employed, and it is only being worse than useless here in keeping up recollections, inconsistent with my present station.'

'My dear, what am I to understand by that? I was hoping, from what I have heard of you lately, that you were putting on that ornament I covet most for

my friends—the meek and quiet spirit, that is of greater price even than such rare workmanship as this. But now I am in doubt whether this be not the old enemy under a new flag. Is it so?'

'If it is,' she replied, with a sad smile, 'I was not aware of it. You are most likely to be right, for the *resistance* goes on still, wrestle as earnestly as I may. And yet, sir, I am learning my lesson by degrees, hard as it is. Pride with me is as unbecoming as that rich lace would be on my old black dress. When I gave up my self-respect and my peace of mind, I ought to have laid my account with humiliation, and prepared myself to meet and endure it. You must teach me how to gain the strength; I never needed it more than at this moment.'

He pressed her to be open with him; if he really knew her troubles, he could better advise and more profitably help her; and softened by his sympathy, and yearning for comfort, she told him what she had done, and the daily disappointment of waiting for an answer.

'Sometimes I think they will not write at all, but mean to take me by surprise—and a ring at the gate-bell will make my heart beat so that I can hardly breathe. Then I try and persuade myself they are all out of town, and Henry is waiting for their return, and the letter, after all, may come to-morrow. I say that every night; and every day when I am disappointed, comes back your text—"God resisteth the proud," and I feel I am unanswered still. How shall I learn to be humble?—or are there some hearts that nothing will bend without breaking?'

'Now you are taking one part of my prescription,

my dear, and leaving out the other, and how can you expect the cure? *Wait!*—that is all you can do—wait in quiet submission and trust; and take delay, suspense, and disappointment as sent from Him. At a moment when you least expect it, and in a way you know not, you may find darkness light before you, and crooked things straight. Meanwhile I will do all you wish, as far as I can; but I was just thinking, is it a good time for parting with a family treasure, after preserving it so long? Will not your mother be vexed when she knows it?'

'My mother?' she said, her eyes filling in a moment; 'you little know her, if you suppose she would not prefer my keeping my word, and paying my debts, to all the heirlooms of Conway and Delaunay put together; and I need not be ashamed of owning to you, that I am too poor to do so in any other way. So if you can help me, dear sir, and keep my counsel, it will be conferring another benefit where you have already conferred so many, if not quite all you wished.'

Touched by her confidence in him, and full of the warmest sympathy for her troubles and anxieties, the old rector promised to undertake the business for her, provided he might do so in his own way. It had occurred to him, that his best counsellor in the matter would be his friend Maurice, and to him he carried it forthwith. Randolph examined the lace carefully, with all the gravity of a connoisseur.

'Why, Maurice, you look for all the world like a haberdasher. What do you advise me to do?'

'If you have any spare guineas, buy it yourself. It is a very good investment.'

'I have none to invest, my boy.'

'That is unlucky. Well, I have, and I have rather a fancy for old curiosities, as you know. I would as soon take lace as china, every bit; especially General Conway's. I will get it valued and keep it. That is soon settled.'

'Well! there is no accounting for taste, nor for the way some people value money. There is that horse of yours at the inn costs you more than a curate's salary, and now you must be *investing*, forsooth, in spiderwork, that only the finest of fine ladies could ever wear—no wife *you* will ever get would venture to put it on, I'll be bound—and all because you have no idea what to do with your money or your time. I doubt you'll run through your fortune now, quicker than you've run through the world, lad.'

For all this, it was with no small complacency that the old gentleman waited a few days afterwards on Lady Adelaide, to put into her hands the liberal price his friend had paid, and to relieve her mind of the painful idea that her family relic should be exposed to public sale. He was rather confounded to see her grow red and pale by turns; that her lip quivered in the attempt to smile, and her eye flashed as she crushed the notes in her hand, as if she would have flung them back had she dared. What had he done? Did she think Maurice Randolph would go and chatter about it all over the place? Not he; it was not his way: and as to the obligation, there was none; for he jumped at the notion of buying it directly, and most likely had some one in his mind to whom it would be a welcome present. But if she was displeased with the transaction, nothing would be easier than to undo it altogether. Recalled to herself by the chagrin of the good old man's voice,

Lady Adelaide made a strong effort to regain her command of countenance, and said all that gratitude and courtesy seemed to require she should say. But the wound to her pride was almost too galling to bear; it seemed as if she had never known humiliation till this moment; and the poor woman who reaped the fruit of her sacrifice, and the worthy neighbours who puzzled their heads hourly, to find out how she contrived to do so much without calling on them to subscribe—little knew that every gift she bestowed, every want she relieved, cost her some of the bitterest tears she had ever shed in her life.

Her period of suspense, however, ended most unexpectedly.

We have already mentioned Abner the gipsy, of whom Randolph purchased his horse. He had obtained permission to bring it over to Cannymoor himself, and Maurice took the opportunity of inquiring what he knew of the poor wanderers they had found. Abner knew whom he meant; but the set they were with were not of his tribe, and decidedly what *he* should call low, half and halfs, part gipsy, part tramp; he had seen some of them at the fair, and knew pretty well what *they* were after. Oh, certainly, if he met with them, he would tell them how good the lady and gentleman had been, and if there was anything else that would please his honour, he should be too glad. He was going to another sale of horses in a day or two; *did* he happen to want such a thing as a neat, clever pony, to ride or drive, in case he *should* happen to fall in with one? Well, Randolph did not care, provided it was really good; but since he was willing to oblige him, there was one thing rather on his mind. He described the

gipsy girl, her behaviour and her language. Abner nodded complacently; he saw what the gentleman wanted; and if plaited leather would do the business, he was not a man to grudge it to oblige him, that he *would* say. Randolph thanked him, but that was not exactly what he wanted.

'The girl provoked me and I cuffed her; she told me I should be sorry for it, and I am, not though in the way she supposed. When I told my adventure to the rector, his only remark was, "Well, and what did you do to help the poor untaught lass to grow better?" Now that had not occurred to me before.'

Abner wondered how it should; it was not likely that gentlefolks should trouble their heads about young imps like that.

'Well, but if one wished to do them good, what should you advise?'

As to that, Abner inclined to plaited leather in liberal proportions, as the only thing likely to be attended to; but owned the youngsters among them never had much of a chance, and often went wrong for want of any one to make 'em better.

'Then this one shall have a chance,' said Randolph, taking out his purse. 'Find her for me; tell her the brown gentleman who speaks Romany sends her these five shillings, to encourage her to be kinder to the sick and helpless next time she is with them: and when she is sick herself, she will know the reason why. Tell her, too, if she has a mind to learn how to get an honest living, I will try and put her in the way of it. I have seen that gipsies can be honest, you know, Abner; and there's for your trouble.'

'Thank ye, sir, and I will do your errand, sharp; but

when all other ways fail, you'll excuse my hoping as you'll not forget the plaited leather. There's nothing encourages the young 'uns like it, nothing. Thank your honour's goodness. If *I* do meet with a neat, clever pony, I'll book him for your honour; yes, I will.'

Nothing more was heard of Abner or his mission for the next fortnight; but at the end of that period, Adelaide and Walter happening to pass the rectory, saw Dr. Home, Mr. Randolph, and Sophy at the gate, in earnest consultation with a long-legged fellow in a velveteen jacket, riding a shaggy pony, his own feet very nearly on a level with those of his steed. He was beginning to show off its paces just as they came up, and to Walter's great admiration, the pony galloped, cantered, and trotted with a superb indifference as to the inches of his rider, as if height and weight were matters quite beneath his notice. He held his mother tight with both hands, lest she should move on before his curiosity was satisfied. It soon came to, 'Oh, mamma! when am *I* to have a pony, as every other gentleman has?'

'When?' cried the old rector, as he stepped forward to greet them both, 'when your mamma, now considered a sensible, prudent woman, becomes no wiser than other folks. Here is a friend of mine, who shall be nameless, really seems so sadly at a loss how to throw away his money fast enough, that I mean to have a collection next Sunday, and catch a little of the golden shower for ourselves. There, Maurice lad, do tell your Bampfylde Moore Carew to have done, or we shall have half the village round us in five minutes.'

Abner accordingly pulled up, and dismounted, pointing out, with great exultation, the manifold perfections of the pony in technical language, which, as well as divers other phrases favoured among his race and guild, the reader will kindly accept in the form of a translation. The burden of the whole was, that never had been, and never would be seen such a pony, for speed, strength, and temper; a young lady might drive him—a child might ride him.'

'Do you hear *that*, Walter?' said the rector. 'Will you try if it be true?'

'It is all stuff about children,' was Walter's reply; 'but I should like to try if he is fit for a gentleman to ride.'

'Should you? then up with you this minute. No, Lady Adelaide, you must let him try. If you have not yet learnt to see him risk his life and limbs, it is high time you began.'

Right gladly did Walter obey, and right proud did he feel and look, as, with Abner running by his side, he cantered all round the churchyard and half way down the village, and came triumphantly back, his cheeks glowing with pleasure and exercise. The gipsy was quite right, there was not such a pony in the whole world, he was sure of that; it was a beauty, and so gentle!—in short, it seemed as if he could not make up his mind to dismount again, and very handsome he looked in the saddle, as everybody remarked, but his mother, who was admiring him in her heart more than any of them. Randolph gave one glance at the glistening eye and brightening smile that betrayed her maternal pride, and announced to Abner that the bargain was closed. The whole party then adjourned into the yard of the rec-

tory, Walter sticking to the back of the pony till the last minute, and Lady Adelaide following because she had no choice. While the children were patting and fondling the quiet creature, and stuffing it with as many carrots as they could beg or steal from Colly's kitchen, Abner began to tell Randolph that he had not forgotten his other commission, though he had thought it right to finish the most important first. Yes, he had found that saucy one, he had, though not without more trouble than she was worth; and he had good hopes she would not play those pranks of hers again in a hurry, seeing as how she had got such a precious soaking the night after the gentleman saw her, she was all crippled with rheumatic fever;—yes, my Lady, that lass they called Ally, though she might be anything for that matter, for she was just a heathen, never christened, nor seen the inside of the church walls; now he (Abner) always made a point of a clean shave on Sundays, and a sermon too, sometimes, when them horses weighed heavy on his spirits; for there's ups and downs in horse-flesh you know, my Lady, as well as in everything else: but that lot knew nothing of what was respectable and decent—how should they? Yes, the girl was badly all over, and no one to care for her, and when she heard what the gentleman had said, and saw what he had sent her, she began to cry. Queer thing to do when she had just got five shillings, the first time Abner had ever known any one cry because they had got money; when one hadn't, it was quite another thing, and not much good even then. The poor wench seemed so bad, he took her to the hospital in Lilford, which was the next town, and when he had done all he could to relieve her sufferings (which it was evident he had, even in his un-

sentimental style of narrative), 'I then telled her my mind, that if she had tasted the leather a little sooner, her bones might not have ached quite so much now, but that I thought it was too late to begin just then; so she had best try and take his honour's advice, and mend and be honest without it. And then she cried again, and begged me to tell the gentleman if she had known he was so good, she never would have robbed him, never! Not but what she would all the same, sir; but I just tell you what she said."

'Did she rob me? I missed nothing,' said Randolph; instinctively feeling his pockets.

'Well, sir, it weren't much, after all; but anyhow, here it all is,' taking a small parcel out of his hat. 'She says she took the handkercher out first, while you was busy over the fire, and then the other dropped from it, and she kept it for pure mischief; and she hopes you will forgive her, as she kept them as clean as she could, in case of making anything by 'em—leastways by the handkercher. Yes, sir, they're both together there, if you'll please to open it.'

Randolph did as he was requested, and bounded as if he had been shot. His eyes turned on Lady Adelaide with a look of consternation that struck her with terror, and she could hardly find voice to ask what was the matter, when the letter she ought to have had a fortnight ago was silently put into her hand. She held it without power to move, volition and understanding seemed paralysed. Dr. Home sprang forwards, drew her arm in his, led her to the parlour, and made her sit down in his own arm-chair. He then drew back, and with Randolph by his side, stood anxiously watching what the effect might be of that communication, so wearily pined for.

The heart of Maurice Randolph, tender as a woman's when in contact with suffering, swelled grievously within him now. He durst not speak, even to exculpate the unwitting carelessness, that had made him forget till this moment the very existence of the letter, entrusted to him to deliver; he could only watch in silence her tremulous efforts to recover composure, and break the seal beneath which lay her destiny. The detention of the letter seemed to be forgotten in the excitement of its arrival; she scarcely noticed that she was observed; the whole world was for her in the pages of Miss Conway's delicate note-paper, and the business-like enclosure of Henry Lyndon. Her cousin's was read first, rapidly and nervously, her breathing growing quicker as the cold insulting heartlessness revealed itself more and more. When it was finished, she looked up at Dr. Home, with a bitter smile.

'You will like to see how kindly my relations feel towards me, sir; that lady was as a sister to me once. Nay, let Mr. Randolph read with you; he is an old friend of hers.'

Dr. Home looked at Randolph and Randolph at him, gravely and uneasily, but neither spoke. Anxiety to know the result made them readily avail themselves of the permission to read the letter, while Lady Adelaide took up Henry's with the listless despondency of one who had nothing more to hope or dread. Its effect was electrical—almost maddening. With a half-stifled shriek, she started up from her seat. 'When did this arrive?'

The agony of the tone cut Randolph to the heart; he could not answer: the old rector attempted to explain and apologize for him, but she seemed incapable of

listening. She only knew that her brother *had* relented—*had* given her an opening—had promised to do all he could if he heard in time—and if it had been only given her it would have been in time, and now it was too late;—and overstrained as her spirits and nerves had been by anxious days and sleepless nights, it was more than they could bear. Strong feelings habitually suppressed, become proportionately vehement when once the restraint is broken; and her agitation was such as seriously to alarm them both. In vain she struggled for composure; she had overtasked her strength, and it was unequal to this sudden demand; nor was it till nature was thoroughly exhausted, that the bursts of hysterical emotion ceased—leaving her too worn out to do anything but lie down submissively, as Dr. Home desired her, on his old horsehair sofa, while he went in quest of some wine and water.

'Just keep an eye on her, Maurice,' said he, as if he had been leaving a baby in his charge. 'I'll be back in a minute,' and away he hurried, leaving them alone.

Then Randolph felt those languid eyes resting on his face, and he covered his own with his hands. The sight of his evident distress recalled her innate courtesy, and she faintly begged he would not think any more about it; she was ashamed of having twice shown such weakness, but she hoped he would forgive it. He came and stood by her side, looking remorsefully down on her pale face.

'I have not dared to name forgiveness,' he began, slowly, 'but if *you* can forgive—'

'No,' she said; 'I can only forgive an intentional injury, and that I need never fear from you.'

He caught her hand in both his, sank on his knees,

and pressed it to his lips; a flood of passionate emotion pouring through heart and brain, before which all else was swept away. A few broken sentences, he scarcely knew what, were all that could be heard; but Lady Adelaide felt, and trembled in every fibre to feel, the burning kisses, the hot tears on her hand, which she was too exhausted to withdraw. Her silence recalled his recollection; he looked up in sudden dread of a glance of scorn, and saw that her eyes were closed, and her lips as white as her face. 'What a selfish, unfeeling brute I am!' was all the consolation he could think of, as he hastened to apply such restoratives as were within reach—feeling terribly guilty when Dr. Home returned with refreshments, and found her looking worse than when he left. Her resolution, however, came to their aid; ashamed of having given way, she was only too ready to declare herself better, and take more blame on her weakness than they were willing to bestow. She even listened, dejectedly enough, but without impatience, while the kind old man suggested grounds for still hoping on, in spite of appearances; that it might not be too late; that Henry Lyndon might be able to rectify the error; that it was, at the worst, but a hope deferred, which might be all the while growing into a tree of life, against the time when it was good for her. All true enough, but in the meanwhile, as Randolph could read in her look, how sick it made the heart that waited! —too sick, at last, even for friendship and sympathy; and the rector was obliged to own, the only kindness left for him to show, was to give her his arm home, and reserve advice and consolation till she was more able to bear them.

As they were walking slowly together, Sophy and

Walter being in advance, he suddenly broke silence to observe, 'I had no idea you were so unforgiving, my dear; you expect others to forgive *you*, and yet you let that poor fellow Maurice watch and wait, as I saw him doing, in hopes of getting one kind look or word to show you bore no malice; and never so much as shook hands with him when you came away. Let me take him one good-natured word back, or I don't know what he will do, he looked so unlike himself.'

She blushed deeply, and after a short pause replied, 'Tell him, then, from me, that those who commit error and cause sorrow themselves, should be the most lenient in their judgment of others.'

CHAPTER X.

But even now, in calm review
Of all I lost and all I won,
I cannot call you wholly true,
Nor wholly just what you have done.
MONCKTON MILNES.

THE happiest homes are the least easy to describe; as some of the sweetest faces are the most difficult to draw. Where passion and care have made deep their furrows, where there are strong lines here, and dark shadows there, the artist can seize and portray them; but the open, bright face of constant sunshine, is as hard to copy as sunshine itself. If you catch one ray, you miss the next; you want to throw the image of perpetual change on a changeless surface, and the result is disappointment, and naturally so. And in like manner it has been much easier to sketch the domestic grievances and differences of Cannymoor, than it is to set before the reader's eye the London home of Henry Lyndon, where none ever seemed to find place.

'God made the country, and man made the town,' saith the poet, not unwisely; but it happens, as often as not, that God is to be found in man's temple, and His enemies in His own. Peace, despite all that has been said and written to the contrary, will leave the

quiet meadows, the misty hills, the free wild upland—to fold her white wings under the darkness of a metropolitan sky; to smile upon dull streets, and house tops, and smoke, and the rumble of wheels, and the medley of noises, preventing any individual noise from being remarkable, that make up the physiology of the London landscape.

Man made the town; yes—but God made the hearts that beat within its walls; and there have been thoughts as lofty, purposes as noble, deeds as romantically heroic, wrought out in the smoke and the din, as ever were nursed on mountain or in valley, in the full revelation of the glory of nature. Therefore, with respect not so far removed from that with which we view the beauty of rock and woodland, look we on the unsightly, begrimed, demon-like chimney—from whose jaws come the honest life of thousands, round which they gather the daily bread that rewards labour, and linked wherewith is a chain of humble efforts, unknown sacrifices, unaware heroisms, that are the poetry of the working-day world—real and sublime as any on earth.

All this, the reader will perceive, is to herald the announcement that there was nothing picturesque, nothing to charm a lover of nature in Henry Lyndon's home. And yet, never did he set his face in that direction without a sense of exhilaration, more refreshing than even the sweetest breath of thyme and heather over a mountain side; and that, we assure our country readers, is saying a great deal for a Londoner. The refreshment that awaited him there, was of a kind that makes labour light, soothes ruffled spirits, rests wearied nerves, and gives strength, life, and gladness, to carry the workman through the next day.

He had been a prudent, as well as an industrious man; he made no attempts at marriage till he had realized enough to insure his wife comfort and elegance; and he selected that wife for those qualities without which there may be a great deal of elegance, but very little comfort. Out of a large family, shrewd lawyer that he was, he picked out the one who could be least spared; the one whom he had observed to be, on all occasions, the centre of everybody's happiness, from a certain sweetness of temper and absence of selfishness, making it as natural to her to think of others as it generally is to take care of oneself; and whether he fully appreciated or not, at the time, the principle which was the mainspring of this amiability, the event justified his discernment, and every day's experience confirmed its value.

Brought up in a home of love, confidence, and good management—among a fabulous number of brothers and sisters, under the constant care of tender and religious parents—guarded from every evil, and strengthened in every juvenile temptation by their sympathy, watchfulness, and prayers—the mind of Emma Vivian had grown up in a healthy, vigorous simplicity; prepared to encounter evil by thinking none, to fight her way through life by disarming her adversaries, and to endure the daily rubs on the gloss of young romance, by having her dearest enthusiasms linked with realities that neither time nor change could deprive of their power. It was her nature to believe, love, and trust; she could not help it; she had lived among those who did so, and was accustomed to nothing else; nor could any one who once looked in her fair, open face—neither strikingly beautiful, nor remarkably clever, but attractive and

sensible enough to do without, have wished for a moment that she should.

She was waiting now, this gusty, dusty March afternoon, for her husband's ring; a small, clear fire making the pretty drawing-room bright, and a baby on her knee, glorious in the needlework of admiring young aunts, of whom there was always a light brigade hovering within reach, and who led it the life of a shuttlecock amongst them. The ladylike neatness and good taste of her dress were only equalled by the arrangement of her home, where care and vigilance were constantly wrestling with London smoke, to keep chintz bright, and carpets fresh; and where everything showed it was meant for use, and yet too good to be used unfairly. A few hot-house flowers in a delicate glass, a few good water-colour drawings on the walls, the last interesting publication on the table, were among the luxuries which Henry indulged himself and her; and all with the same stamp of taste for what is lovely and of good report. In time the young mistress might have to endure seeing little hands and feet disturb all her cherished order and propriety; but at present she had it all her own way, and the best of babies was only one ornamental piece of furniture the more.

She had been looking forward all day to her favourite treat of being read to by Henry in the evening; and had religiously abstained from going on with the book he had begun, in the hope, but too often disappointed, that he might not be too busy, or too tired, to enjoy the recreation that pleased him best. He arrived at last, looking, as he seldom did in her presence, vexed beyond power of concealment; and even while paying homage

due to his little daughter, who had no idea of business interfering with her claims, could not refrain from giving vent to the dissatisfaction rampant within him. Considering that he had only just heard, what the reader already knows, of the result of his exertions as mediator, this state of mind may not be deemed altogether unreasonable; and it was not long before the absolute necessity of relief made him briefly explain to his wife the circumstances of the case.

'Not hearing from Lady Adelaide, or receiving any intelligence from Lord Delaunay, I called at last at his house, and found he was gone abroad, leaving a cool note for me, requesting any further communications might be made through Mr. Stevenson, his solicitor. Knowing pretty well what this meant, I sent it off to Lady Adelaide, telling her in plain English I had done all I could for her; but as she, of course, knew her own affairs best, I had only to regret her decision and bow to it. Back comes her answer; she had only just received the packet I sent her a fortnight ago, which some officious friend had fetched from the post, and forgotten to deliver; had his pocket picked by a gipsy, and had only just got it back. I wish to goodness people would mind their own affairs, and leave other people's letters alone. I am sure I don't know what is to be done next, and what is more, I don't care.'

That this was not meant in earnest, his gentle wife knew as well as he did himself; but while she was considering what consolatory remark would ruffle him least, a card was brought to Henry, with the announcement that the gentleman wished to see him on very particular business. With another growl at the unreasonable hours people would choose for arranging their affairs,

he entered his name to be shown into the dining-room, promising himself that Emma that he would soon settle the matters, whatever they might be.

Emma waited long and patiently, expecting every minute to hear the bell—hour time: but it was just dinner-time. The hour it takes seconds to number than when they first began, and with all the emotion of a young housekeeper, she recollected that her husband's favourite fish would infallibly be spoiled if kept waiting. Loss of time for her reputation. However, the dining-room door opened, and the next minute Henry appeared, followed by a tall, handsome stranger, with a dark moustache, whom he introduced as Mr. Randolph, just arrived from Cannymoor to share their family dinner.

However disappointing this arrangement might be, she was too good a wife to let it appear; and it was not long before she felt disposed to welcome the visitor for his own sake. He was so pleasant and agreeable, and took such notice of the baby—who appeared to receive his advances with as much complacency as if she were one of the ladies of Cannymoor—it was impossible to feel sorry he was come. He repudiated with indignation the suggestion of his host—himself an intense believer in his baby, but professing free-thinking opinions before company—that no man could understand the infant race, or know one from another. In contradiction of this, the visitor narrated his own exploit in restoring a baby to health; a story deeply interesting to Emma, who had some private notions of her own about homœopathy, which not even Henry's sarcasms could eradicate. She was eager to hear more about Cannymoor and the people, of whom Henry never

would tell her half she wished to know; and she was plying Randolph with questions he might have found it difficult to answer satisfactorily, when her husband quietly changed the subject. He had his reasons, perhaps, for not wishing her to know too much of that locality; and during the dinner there were so many interesting topics to discuss of political news, travels, and literature, that it was not till the dessert was on the table, and the three were alone, that the subject was renewed—this time by himself.

'You have no objection, Mr. Randolph, to mentioning before my wife what has brought you to town?'

'I have one great objection,' said he; 'and that is, that it must lower me in her opinion; but in hopes of her advice, I will submit to the penalty I deserve.'

'Read that, then, Emma,' said her husband, throwing a note to her across the table.

Emma read with some curiosity:—

CANNYMOOR RECTORY, *March*, 18—

DEAR LYNDON,—The bearer of this, my friend, Mr. Maurice Randolph, has had the misfortune to do a very careless thing, which, if it injured himself might not signify, but as it affects a friend of yours and mine, becomes a serious matter. I have recommended his applying to you for counsel how to undo the mischief he has done, and I am much deceived in my opinion of you, if you scruple to make all the use of him you can.

Yours sincerely, A. HOME.

A light began to dawn on Mrs. Henry Lyndon as she finished this original letter of recommendation. She glanced half-inquiringly at her husband, and his

look confirmed the rising conjecture. Randolph answered the unspoken question.

'I see you understand the allusion, Mrs. Lyndon; you are acquainted with some particulars of the case, but you should hear more before you judge.'

And he described the whole scene, and how he had been at the time so absorbed in the attention required by the sick wanderer, as never to remember the letter he had thrust into his pocket; no wonder, that after it had been abstracted, it should escape his recollection altogether. He would have given half he possessed sooner than that such a thing should have occurred; he had not rested a moment since its discovery, and he should not rest, he felt assured, till he had done something to make amends. His tone was so thoroughly in earnest, all anger was disarmed at once. Emma, interested in the whole story, and in all she had been hearing of Lady Adelaide, begged for more particulars. What was her history, and the reason of her family's resentment? How was it that no friends or relations of her own had come forward to take her part—what had she done?

'Ah!' said Henry, filling his glass, and pushing the decanter to his guest; 'that is a long story, and a puzzling one. I myself only know it in part, and I rather imagine we must look to Mr. Randolph to explain the rest. Our good friend Dr. Home exhorts me to make you useful; believe me, I mean to take his advice; and the mischief you have done us may, after all, be more than repaired if, by the additional light you can throw on the past, you enable me to get the clue I have been hunting for to no purpose.'

'If there is anything in which my experience can be

of service,' said Randolph, with a sigh, 'you have a right to command it to the utmost; but I doubt it.'

'Allow me to ask then, are you not acquainted with Lady Delaunay?'

'Not personally; I was private secretary to her uncle, General Conway, some years ago.'

'And was Miss Conway, Lady Delaunay's niece, residing with him at that time?'

'She was.'

'Did you ever see Lady Adelaide there?'

'Yes.'

'Were you there at the time of her marriage?'

'No.'

The answers were given so abruptly, and the speaker's colour deepened so much, it caught Emma's attention. She looked quickly at her husband, and he at her.

'I think you said, Mr. Randolph,' resumed Henry, after a pause, 'that Lady Adelaide showed you those letters?'

'She did me that honour. I believe it was principally because in her agitation she overlooked everything but the bitter disappointment. It was, indeed, seeing how very different was the tone of Lord Delaunay's two messages, that decided Dr. Home and myself on applying to you for an explanation.'

'Miss Conway's note, then, was not remarkably affectionate?'

'It was so cold and heartless, I could hardly believe it to be her writing; when I saw them last together, they were intimate and attached friends.'

'And can you in any way account for this intimacy and attachment being broken off?'

'No—the estrangement must have begun since I left the general's house.'

'Do not you think it would be worth while to find out?'

Randolph looked up inquiringly.

'You see,' said Henry, smiling, 'I am taking it for granted that you are ready and anxious to give us your assistance in the matter that sits very near the hearts of some of us. At the same time, it is not to be expected you should feel as we do, who cannot forget that Lady Adelaide's entrance into our family cost her all her own. How they can have persuaded themselves to be so harsh with such a woman, puzzles me, or would, did I not suspect now a little underhand dealing that is quite enough to account for it. Lord Delaunay would evidently be glad of a reconciliation, but has not resolution enough to carry it out against the will of the others; and Miss Conway shows by her manner it shall not be if she can help it. What Lady Delaunay herself feels on the subject, one can only conjecture by the result, as she is unapproachable. I cannot help suspecting that circumstances may have been represented to her in some dexterously false light, so as to warp her better judgment; and persuade her that family honour, or family pride, or whatever they please to call it, requires she should treat with persevering unkindness one of the noblest creatures this world ever saw.'

'Is her daughter then so very charming?' asked Emma, eagerly.

'She is very beautiful,' was Randolph's slow, guarded answer.

'Ah!' said Henry, rising to stir the fire; 'but do you remember what she used to be?'

He bowed silently.

'That bright, earnest, animated face, full of its high romantic passion, that looked as if it had never known a care or a sorrow that was not of the imagination—who could ever forget that? So she was when I saw her first. When I met her at Southampton, on her return from India, she did not look exactly the same, Emma.'

'Poor thing!' said Emma, heartily; 'I wish there was anything I could do for her.'

'I have wished that for a long while,' said Henry, discontentedly, 'and have done what I could. I have argued the point with their lawyers; I would have tried my skill on some other branches of the family, to see if their intercession would be of more service; but I found that there was quite enough discord among them to make that a dangerous experiment. Lady Adelaide herself warned me against the attempt. This time I had hopes through her brother, and now—'

'I have defeated them,' interrupted Randolph; 'and you think the least I can do is to try my powers in return. Well, if it must be, I am bound not to refuse; but it is a strange service for me to undertake, of all people. If you only knew—'

He paused, as if he could not go on; rose from his chair, and went to the fire, without seeming the least aware of what he was doing; plucked at and twisted his long moustache with desperate energy—faced round again, and looked first at one, then at the other, with a yearning wistfulness that seemed to crave sympathy and to long to confide. Their eyes watched him with friendly anxiety; Emma's were bright with interest, for she began to understand. After a pause of some

minutes, she said with a smile and a blush, 'Perhaps, Mr. Randolph, you could talk more freely, if I were to leave you together?'

'Mrs. Lyndon, on the contrary, it is the kindness and indulgence of your face that could alone give me courage to speak at all.'

'Then will you trust us as friends, if I stay?'

'May I?' he said, with eagerness; and then pausing with an oppressed sigh, as if the comfort of sympathy was almost too great to expect. 'If I dared trouble you—if I thought it would not be presuming too much —I feel as if you were indeed old friends, and what you have asked of me just now, shows me how necessary it is you should know something more of my past existence; then you can judge for yourselves how far my help is likely to be of value.'

Their cordial expressions of interest encouraged his confidence, and his last scruple melted before Emma's smile.

'Yes, I feel that you are friends,' he began, abruptly. 'I have lived long enough, and seen variety enough, to be tolerably acute in that matter. I will open my mind to you as at a confessional.

'I was brought up in the expectation of being my uncle Randolph's heir; my father's name was Gray, and by that name I was known to General Conway. My grandfather was his brother officer, and he always retained a friendly feeling towards our family. I lost my uncle's favour by holding opposite political opinions to his own; he was a hot reformer, and I as hot on the other side; and it ended in his declaring I should never see a sixpence of his money, unless I adopted his views.'

'A shrewd way of arguing,' said Henry. 'Nothing more convincing than the screw.'

'But it did not influence you, Mr. Randolph, I am sure!' cried Emma.

'Well, Mrs. Lyndon, at that age one is not so easily bought. One is apt to believe character, acquirements, and earnestness require no gilding to make their way: later in life we see the mistake: I have been in places where the brightest gold that bears our good Queen's image would not carry on the war as well as a parcel of coarse silver coins, or ragged notes; and it is often much the same in society.'

Emma looked serious. 'Is that really the case? I have never mixed much in society, but I always understood right-minded sincere people were sure to be the most respected in the end. Don't you think so, Henry?'

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders. '*C'est selon;*' he said, 'as Mr. Randolph observes, some people prefer small change, however dirty, because they have never professed anything higher; so if you will have dealings with them, you must e'en fill your pockets with infinitesimal fractions of a penny sterling, and keep your sovereigns till they are likely to be valued. Our friend here, you see, had only his fire-new political sincerity to offer his uncle, fresh and clean from the mint—and it would not pass.'

'That is all very well,' said Emma, 'and you know you can soon puzzle me with that kind of argument; but you cannot persuade me that anybody is ever the better off for not doing what he knows to be right.'

'That depends on what people mean by "better off,"' returned Henry.

'Oh, Harry! can there be any question about it?'

'A great many, my dear. For instance, I have heard some people say we should be better off without law; and I protest against the assertion emphatically.'

Emma turned good humouredly to Randolph. 'That is how I am silenced, you see. I shall gain nothing by attempting to argue; and I suspect my reasoning will be better supported by your story than by any wise things I could say. Pray go on. You quarrelled with your uncle, then?'

'There must be two parties, it is said, to make a quarrel,' returned Randolph, 'and I revered him too much to be one of them. However he was offended by my resistance, and I was thrown on my own resources rather suddenly. I will not trouble you with the account of my various attempts to make a gentlemanly livelihood; it is only the story of hundreds every day, and did me a great deal of good, by teaching me self-reliance and endurance. I applied at last to General Conway, and his kindness I must ever remember with gratitude. He made me his private secretary, with a liberal salary; and always treated me as a gentleman and a friend. My duties were light, and I had a library, and workshop and laboratory, and what not, at my disposal—companions I have often looked back to with regret. The general's family circle only consisted of two ladies, relations of his own; one an elderly widowed cousin, and the other his great niece, Miss Conway, whom Mr. Lyndon has seen. She was the actual mistress of the house while I was there. She treated me coldly at first, I remember, but afterwards with a friendly cordiality that made everything pleasant enough. At her own request I gave her lessons in

Latin, and philosophy, and so forth; the general only cared for the society of old officers, and good whist-players, and used to send us "youngsters" as he called us, riding and walking, to be out of the way. Mrs. Marsden, his cousin, was a kind-hearted old lady—sufficiently attached to him to share his tastes as a matter of course: and when the board of green cloth, as it constantly did, claimed her services, the care of entertaining any younger guests that might be invited partly devolved on me. There came one visitor at last—'

Something seemed to choke his voice; he began on a different tack.

'At that time parties ran very high; the ministry were unpopular, a general election was expected, and the leaders on both sides were collecting their forces, strengthening their ranks, and completely absorbed in preparations for the coming struggle. The house of Lady Delaunay was one of the strongholds; her son, the young Earl, was finishing his education, preparatory to assuming the lead in his party, which he was then expected to do—as it would appear, with very little foundation—and meanwhile she was an able regent. All the leading men were to be found at her house; her literary taste drew the wits and authors to her elegant and brilliant *soirées;* and there is no doubt she at that time possessed political interest enough to arm her with no small amount of power. The consequence of all this, however, was, that Lady Delaunay, whom everybody admired and respected, even when they differed from her in opinion, had very little leisure to bestow on her daughter, then hardly sixteen; and it was at this period she began to be a constant visitor at

General Conway's. Sometimes she was with us for weeks at a time, shared in the lessons I gave her cousin, and into whatever she undertook, whether study or recreation, infused a life and grace which were utterly wanting till then. If the house had been pleasant before, what do you suppose it became now? You have described her as you saw her, Mr. Lyndon; but were *I* to attempt to describe—if I durst give the reins to memory, and live that dream over again—'

He shaded his brow with his hand, and seemed unable to proceed. Emma, whose tender-heartedness was glistening in her eyes, laid a soothing touch on his arm. 'A dream of anything lovely and good, who would ever wish to forget?'

'Where it is *only* a dream,' remarked Henry, passing the wine to his guest, 'the sooner it is forgotten the better; but where time and trials have tested the reality, and shown its value, the question assumes a different aspect altogether. Yes,' for Maurice looked keenly round; 'without attempting to prove her to be more faultless or prudent than any other woman—especially in such peculiar circumstances—I know enough to warrant my defending her against much that has been said; and which you, perhaps, like many others, have believed too quickly.'

'Convince me that I have,' said Maurice, with emotion, 'and there is no service I would not render you in return. But you have not heard me out, and perhaps anticipate my story too hastily. What the effect of this intercourse was upon me, it were affectation to pretend to deny; you have surmised it already. Thrown constantly together—seeing her, as I did, at all hours, and under all circumstances—admitted, during the

hours of study, to an insight into the generous thoughts of her young, fresh mind, where the very faults of her education and temperament took an engaging form—looking round me in vain for any creature that could be her equal, and finding every comparison only raise her higher still—I gave up my soul to the influence; I loved her, worshipped her—how madly, I never knew till too late. It came on me by degrees, and when I woke to the conviction, it had become my master, my life of life. And yet—spare me the thought on your lips, Mrs. Lyndon—honour bound me not to avail myself of my position; I could only be her friend, and I persuaded myself—fool that I was! that with such a friendship I could be satisfied; that to be near her, to see her, to share her confidence, and to spend my life in her service, would be happiness enough, without desiring what I might not attempt to win. Love was never named between us, but friendship often; and ours was to be what earth had never seen before, in its self-devotion, its constancy, its generous truth. *Ay de mi!* we were no wiser than children, and those who threw us together have not even that excuse. They had no right to tempt a man as they tempted me: it was a terrible moment when I made the discovery, that there was no safety left me but in flight, and that without looking behind me; but my mind was soon made up—go I must, and go I would.'

'Oh, you acted nobly!' said Emma, with a sigh of relief.

'I made my arrangements privately, and then went to the general to announce my intention. He seemed surprised and hurt, but was all kindness, urged me to think twice, offered to increase my salary,

to allow me more relaxation, anything reasonable, if I would only name it; but to leave him in this hasty manner without a cause assigned, he said, was neither worthy of himself nor me. So as he would have it, I told him, bluntly enough, I believe, that his niece was too charming, and that though a poor secretary, as I was, I knew my own position too correctly to aspire, yet I could not trust myself, and would not remain an hour longer than I could possibly help. He shook me by the hand, with the tears in his eyes—God bless his memory! he is under the sod, which covers many a wiser, and perhaps more useful a head, but few kinder hearts. He seemed unable to comprehend the immediate urgency of the case, desired me to sit down, and wait while he considered it; and left me in his study, while as it appeared, he went in quest of Miss Conway. "Here, Gray," said he, as he brought her in, "here is one who can advise you the best; tell her what you have just told me, and let her decide whether you should go or stay." And he left us together.'

Henry Lyndon leaned forward, and became keenly attentive.

'What the general meant by this proceeding, I could not conceive; however, as he left me no choice, I told Miss Conway the truth. Not even his encouraging manner could give me hope, but there was some faint consolation in feeling, that, when I was far away, *she* might some day know her friend was not wholly unworthy of her esteem. Whatever her uncle had led Miss Conway to expect, it certainly was not this; for though I hardly heeded it at the time, I never never saw a countenance change so suddenly. I suppose she saw the madness of it as I did myself, for she

was evidently more disturbed than she cared to show: however, on my pressing for her approval of my determination, she held out her hand with an air of great kindness, telling me she was quite sure it was the only thing left for me to do, and she hoped for my own sake I had not thought of it too late.

'That afternoon was one of the most beautiful in June, and June never comes back without recalling, too vividly for my peace, every incident of those last hours. I have lived them over again so many times, that you must forgive any prolixity of detail into which I may be betrayed; the sum total of the whole tends but to prove myself a fool, so I have little cause to make more words about it than necessary. At any rate, that afternoon, as I was wandering about the shrubbery, endeavouring to cool down my excited brain—it wanted cooling badly enough in all conscience—I suddenly came upon the two cousins, in eager conversation, which broke off abruptly on my appearance. Miss Conway rose from the bench where they were seated, and met me with a strange smile whose meaning I could not fathom, saying, "You are just in time, Mr. Gray; I leave you to hear my cousin's opinion of your self-sacrifice from her own lips.'

'I turned from her, as she swept past, to look in that face which had been to me as an angel's. That she should have been informed why I was going, was an unnecessary indiscretion I was quite unprepared for; but the secret once betrayed, all that was left for me was to preserve my honour, and neither by word nor look disturb the peace dearer to me than my own. If ever there was an honest, straightforward purpose in a man's heart, it was mine at that moment. To take leave of

her as a friend, to receive her approbation, to tell her that, however far asunder, my prayers, my thoughts, my life-blood, would ever be hers—was all I could hope, or dare to do, and more than I had ventured to expect. But when I looked at her, I was dumb. Scorn, resentment, and wounded pride, had transformed those brilliant features into the face of a young Medusa; and Medusa-like, it seemed to turn me to stone. What passed I cannot repeat to you; in the countless times that that scene has returned to haunt and madden me, I never could recal her exact words—perhaps I did not hear them all—but the purport I understood too well. The eyes flashing through angry tears, the flushed cheek, the laugh, by far the worst of all, were interpreters there was no mistaking. She regretted that I thought it necessary to leave on her account; regretted that she had been, however unconsciously, the means of causing me any inconvenience; if I had known her more intimately, and understood her position a little better, I should have been spared a great deal of trouble and anxiety. This was all said with comparative composure, but when I recovered myself sufficiently to begin some apology or explanation—I hardly know what, for I was half mad—I only remember imploring her to listen to me, and in vain—her indignation burst forth; she flung her hand from mine as I tried to detain her, saying she could endure everything from me but the insult of a profession of regard. After what had passed, *I* might forget the distance between us, but *she* could—never!

'And so we parted: and the distance of which she spoke so haughtily, became from that moment an immeasurable thing. I never saw her again till I met her at the Manorhouse at Cannymoor.'

'Did you know of her marriage?' asked Henry, after a short silence.

'I saw it in an old newspaper, some time after it had taken place; I was then abroad. After leaving the general—which I did that evening, with briefer apology than his goodness deserved (for which I have often reproached myself since)—I tried to get employment, but before I succeeded, my uncle fell ill, and sent for me; and whether he thought from expressions let fall in the bitterness of my soul, that my views about the aristocracy were considerably modified, or whether the old kindness was too strong within him at the last, we became reconciled; he died soon after, leaving me his name, and wealth sufficient to gratify every wish. My first was to put the sea between me and England; and the restlessness growing by what it fed on, I became a wanderer from that day, seeking rest and finding none; for no change of scene or condition can make me forget. I have thrown myself into danger, tracked it into its dens and strongholds, held my life in my hand, as it were, for months together; but no excitement, no exertion, no reason, no philosophy, has been able to efface that image, and drown the echo of that last bitter laugh.

'I heard at last, accidentally, from some officers who had known them in India, that her husband was dead, and she was living in England. A passionate desire to see her again, even as an enemy, overcame every other consideration. I set off homewards, traced her to Cannymoor, and finding my old tutor, Dr. Home, settled there, availed myself of the opportunity of becoming his guest.'

'And why did you wish so much to see her again?' asked Emma, gently.

'I dare not tell you, Mrs. Lyndon.'

'Oh, you may indeed; I believe I know already. You felt how noble and generous it would be, since you were now so much better off than herself, to come back as if nothing had passed, and return her unkindness—which was very great, I must own—by being a true and generous friend in her adversity. Was it not so, Mr. Randolph?'

'No,' he said, 'I dare not say it was. You judge of others by your own gentle nature; *you* would have felt so, I know; but I am a man of sinful passions, and nothing more. Morbid and overstrained as it may appear to you, whenever I recalled her treatment of me, my blood boiled to resent the insult, and its memory was burning on my lips when I spoke to her once more. I dealt with her too harshly—I spoke too bitterly—and she who had treated me as beneath her notice, I felt to be quailing before mine.'

'Poor thing!' said Emma, again, still more compassionately than before.

'Ay,' added Henry, drily, 'she did not exactly want an extra fardel in her heap, I imagine. There is no denying, however, your indignation was natural at such treatment; it was cruel, heartless, and utterly unworthy of her. Faults of imprudence are natural at that age; but this was so unlike herself altogether, that I am more than ever convinced there is something unexplained. Miss Conway's behaviour strikes me as peculiarly suspicious and questionable. Your having, whether voluntarily or not, admitted her into your confidence, made it at least incumbent upon her to hold her tongue; and I should uncommonly like to have her upon oath, and cross-examine her as to what she did really say, and why she said it. One thing, however,

seems pretty clear, that it would be expecting too much of human nature to hope you can take an interest in Lady Adelaide's subsequent fortunes or misfortunes, or share our anxiety to restore her peace of mind.'

'Before I answer that,' said Randolph, 'I have a request to make. May I ask you to show me as much frankness as I have shown you, and tell me all you are at liberty to tell of her marriage and her married life. Tell me something of that—that man—I name him with respect—whose early fate was cheaply purchased by being loved in life as he must have been. Was he indeed so superior, as to make up to that haughty spirit for all she lost?'

'As to that,' said Henry, 'to speak frankly, as you request, and have a right to claim—he was a fine, handsome fellow, indulged from his cradle, heedless, good-natured, easily led where pleasure was concerned, a brave officer as far as danger went, but with little or no head. His education had been very insufficient, and his abilities were nothing remarkable; but there was a charm about him, nevertheless, that is difficult to describe; something so winning in his eager, impetuous ways, so affectionate, so warm-hearted, with all his imprudence, that he generally carried his point against us all. What was his first attraction in her eyes, I cannot pretend to say; but he was passionately devoted to her, and not having your honourable scruples to silence him, took care she should know it so distinctly, there could be no chance of mistake. They met first at some archery meeting, or *fête* of some kind, while Lady Adelaide was at General Conway's, which must have been soon after your departure, and from that hour poor Walter's fate was sealed. His father had placed him, most un-

wisely, in an expensive cavalry regiment, stationed in that neighbourhood; he had formed friendships with some of the most fashionable men in it, much above him in rank and fortune, and they introduced him everywhere, and taught him how to spend money considerably faster than his father had any idea of. In fact, he was very much in debt, but I did know that till afterwards. I was then fagging at the uphill part of my profession in town, and only saw him occasionally; soon, however, his eagerness for a confidant brought him to me, and I heard of nothing but Lady Adelaide Chester. She had returned to her mother's house, and nothing would do but I must go and see her ride in Hyde Park. There it was I saw her first, as I told you, and surely never lighted on this orb—on horseback, at any rate—a more delightful vision—or one less adapted for poor Walter, as I did not scruple to tell him. It seemed to drive him mad, when I told him I saw no hope for him; I thought he would have struck me. "No hope?" he repeated, "but if I did not hope, and feel certain of winning her, I should die!" I thought he *would* have died more than once, from brain fever, before it was all done.

'He got leave of absence, took expensive lodgings in town, was constantly rushing from one scene of amusement to another, wherever there was a chance of meeting her, and thanks to the friends he had made, they met very often. It was her first season in London, and people were wild about her. I saw her once in public with her mother, and if any one looked proud of another, Lady Delaunay was then of her daughter, and cared not who knew it. But I was much too busy and too unfashionable to know much of what was going on,

and Walter had but little time to come near me. One evening, however, after a long interval, he rushed into my room, nearly beside himself. It was all over with him—his regiment was under orders for India in three weeks; and as fighting was expected to have begun before they arrived, he could not in honour exchange. It was done to get rid of him—he knew it for certain.

'And so I believe it was. I never could understand the rights of the story, but it appeared that their attachment had been communicated to Lady Delaunay, and had been instantly prohibited; that her daughter's remonstrances and resistance had only served to make her more determined, and that as the surest way of putting Walter out of Adelaide's head, a little secret influence was set to work at the Horse Guards to get the gallant —th fairly out of reach. It did seem hard measure to an only son; at least, I thought so at the time; though, after all, it was only what in his profession he should have been prepared for; but to Walter it appeared such a piece of tyrannical cruelty as the Middle Ages could not parallel. He raged about my room like a lion; declared he would baffle the woman after all; if he lost everything for Adelaide's sake, he had a right to expect the same from her; and away he went, deaf to all my persuasions and soothing. I wanted him to go home and take leave of his father and mother; and as I heard nothing more for a fortnight, was in hopes he had done so—little dreaming what he was about—till he came to entrust to my honour the secret that they were to be privately married at —— Church the next morning. The curate was his own particular friend, and had shown him how to get

over difficulties, instead of making any; their banns had been put up without causing any discovery; he did not believe six people in the church heard the names; everything was arranged and agreed upon. Would I stand by him, and help him through it all?

'Well, I was young myself, and I loved him, and he relied on me: right or wrong, I could not refuse. Indeed, if I had, I do not know what would have become of him; he was worked up to a pitch of ungovernable excitement that gave me considerable fears for his health; and if it alarmed *me*, what must have been its effect upon *her*, who looked upon him, as he did upon himself, as wilfully sacrificed by her friends on her account? I have never been able to judge her severely, even when I regretted her weakness most; for I knew Walter had not spared her then, nor did he ever afterwards. His love was idolatry, but he required its object to exist for him alone.

'When I saw her come into the still church the morning of their marriage, agitated, pale, and dreading observation, with only a maid-servant as a companion, the selfishness of the whole proceeding struck me to the heart. I longed to prevent it—I said all I could, and pretty plainly; but I might as well have lectured to the pew cushions. *She* only saw in him one sacrificed for her, and for whom the least she could do was to give up all in return; and it was expecting too much from human nature, perhaps, to ask him to relinquish, even for her own sake, the prize just within his grasp. But neither of them, I have reason to believe, ever thought me the less their friend for my frankness. The service began; the curate, who knew the

risk he incurred, seemed nervously anxious to get it over; it was nearly finished, when a slight bustle near the door made me look round. The clergyman looked too, and faltered—no wonder—for there was Lady Delaunay.

'Walter and Adelaide, lost to all but themselves, saw and heard nothing; to my surprise, the mother made no interruption. No doubt she had intended to forbid the ceremony, but finding it so nearly completed, she stood there, a witness to the most flagrant act of rebellion a parent can know. Never did I see a more imposing expression of suffering proudly suppressed. She is a small, slender woman, without her daughter's grandeur of carriage and height; but her dignity seemed to raise her above us all. I could not take my eyes off her face, nor she hers from the kneeling form of her daughter. What relentless purpose she vowed during those moments I cannot say; my apprehensions deepened as I watched—the more that I felt what strong cause she had for resentment. The curate did not like it, but he was no coward, and his sympathy was all with the young people, and he went steadily through the service to the end. Then Adelaide rose, turned—saw her mother's stern, sad face—and I was only just in time to catch her in my arms, for she dropped as if a shot had passed through her heart.

'Not a shadow of tenderness was now on that mother's features; no Roman ever steeled himself more resolutely. She came up to Walter in her stateliest manner, and without a glance at her daughter, told him her solicitor would communicate with him; and then left the church, before he could find a word in reply. We were some time bringing Adelaide to

herself; the shock, at such a moment of agitation, had been very severe; indeed, she tells me she has never quite recovered its effects; any strong emotion is apt to bring on an attack of faintness even now. When she did regain consciousness, her agony of mind was terrible; I do not believe she had realized till then the step she was taking, nor the light in which her mother would view it; now she was in a fever to obtain her pardon; and bitterly lamented the weakness that had cost her her last opportunity. Walter's distress on her account made her at last control herself; we took her to the lodgings he had prepared; and I had enough to do, making arrangements for her to go with him to India. They had no more idea than two children how to set about things; she learned the quickest though, and that very soon. In due course came the lawyer's communication; ten thousand pounds had been left to Lady Adelaide by her father on her coming of age, or, at the pleasure of her mother, on her marriage. This, by Lady Delaunay's desire, would be paid to Mr. Walter Lyndon's account at once. All communications were to be made through the solicitor, as Lady Delaunay declined receiving any letters.

'This was no great fortune, but to Walter it seemed boundless wealth, and though I then found out how heavily he was embarrassed, I could not prevent his wasting money on himself and her, as if there was no possibility of its ever coming to an end. It was no use arguing the point; for he always maintained Lady Delaunay would be sure to come round, and leave Adelaide lots of money by and by. What else could she do with that fine jointure of hers, entirely at her

own disposal? He would give her a reasonable time to get over her peevishness, and I should see if she would not be only too glad to have her daughter in England again, on any terms. *She* thought differently; and I could see, even then, she had already begun to feel the results of such an act as hers. She wrote to her cousin, on whom she seemed to place firm reliance, and sent message after message to her mother; but the answers that came back through the same channel, were only of a nature to sting and harden her. Something was written in disparagement of her husband that made her, in defiance of the prohibition, send off a letter to her mother direct, and from her she received an answer; what it was, I do not know, but Adelaide wrote no more—has never dared to write again.

'There was no time now for Walter to go home, so he only wrote to take leave and announce his marriage; and I believe the gradual failure of his mother's already wavering intellects dates from that time. He had always been her darling.

'They corresponded regularly with me; Walter bought his promotion, and through some family friends of hers out there, got a command, and showed great spirit on several occasions. They might have done well, if he only would have been prudent; as it was—but it is no use talking of that. His wife, he told me in all his letters, was everything to him; such an angel of goodness, so clever, such a head for managing and remembering things! Poor boy, he could appreciate that, for he had none. And from all I heard, I could perceive how she was thinking and working for him, keeping him up to the mark, saving his money, curtailing all her own expenses and comforts to make up

for his recklessness; and never did she write a word of complaint or blame. They had two children—Walter, whom you have seen, and a little girl, whose death was a blow that she was long in recovering. She had named it after her mother, in the hope of placing it in her arms one day; and when it died it seemed, she has told me since, as if that mother's curse was visibly at work upon her. Then came war again, and in one of those unhappy disasters we remember too well, Walter and part of his regiment, with several ladies, children, and women, were missing. It was some time before the truth was known; how they had been beguiled into a pass—the greater number cut to pieces—the rest made prisoners, or scattered over the country; how Walter had fallen among the first, and Adelaide and her little boy saved by a native servant, who hid them with friends of his own, and helped them, through toils and hardships and danger, to a place of safety. Not from herself, but from other quarters did I hear how she had behaved through it all—fearless, heroic in imminent peril—patient, unmurmuring under privation—her first anxiety had been to clear her husband's honour; and the evidence she gave was so lucid and forcible, it removed the unfavourable impression, and Captain Lyndon was named in the despatches with regret, if not with praise. I was in hopes all this might have stirred up her family to some compassionate feeling; but whether they expected her to make advances she was too proud to do—or whether, as I have since had reason to surmise, some underhand influence interposed to prevent any kind intention being carried out—when she came back, a widow with an only child, and the poor native as her sole attendant, there was

no one to welcome her but myself, and no home for her but Cannymoor. There she has been ever since, and there, I suppose, she must remain till she has pined her heart away.'

'No, Harry, no!' exclaimed Emma, with tears in her eyes. 'Something must, something *shall* be done for her!'

CHAPTER XI.

And truly, I'll devise some honest slanders
To stain my cousin with: one doth not know
How much an ill word may empoison liking.

SHAKESPEARE.

EMMA was one of those quick-pulsed individuals who form their plans, consider them, mature them, and begin putting them into execution, in the same amount of time that one, with a slower circulation, would require to conceive the original idea. All the time she was making tea for her husband and guest, she was arranging in her mind the details of her scheme; and by the time she could lay it privately before Henry, she was quite ready to go to work. Her plan was, to avail themselves of a wish, repeatedly expressed by Mr. Lyndon, that they would pay him a visit at Cannymoor; and proposed as soon as possible to go down (it would do the baby a great deal of good, and Henry too), stay there as long as they found it advisable, persuade Lady Adelaide to come back with them to London, and then, somehow or other (for even Emma's sanguine spirit and imagination did not see exactly how it was to be done), bring about an interview between her and her mother.

'All these letters and *go-betweens*,' argued she, 'are only more tedious ways of doing what a few words,

face to face, would do in five minutes. It is the old resource of novel-writers, you know, to prevent the parties from coming to a sensible explanation. I am quite sure that both mother and daughter, in their secret souls, must long to own to each other where they have been wrong; but they will never do it through other people. Let us only entice that poor thing here, and win her confidence, and comfort her; and something will be sure to turn up. You will find some way of managing it.'

Henry listened in silence, with a face expressing anything but enthusiasm; for whatever value he set on his wife's hearty sympathy and kindness, he was much too good a husband to let a plan be made in a hurry without throwing a little cold water upon it. Emma, in a fever to begin making arrangements, waited eagerly for his assent.

'What is it, dear?' she asked, seeing it did not come. 'Do you disapprove of the whole affair?'

'No,' said he, coolly; 'on the contrary, I think it a very clever scheme, with only one or two little objections, that may be of no consequence. First, that you will kill the child if you take her to such a bleak region this time of year; secondly, that if I take you, I must leave you there, for I am much too busy to stay out of town; and thirdly, that the chances are, Lady Adelaide will not thank you for your interference.'

Emma looked rather blank, especially at the last intimation.

'Why, you spoke so highly of her to Mr. Randolph—I fancied her so amiable and interesting—'

'I retract nothing I said, my love. If you fancy I

said more, I cannot help it. The best of you have your little failings, just to remind us you are mortal; and hers lies in—what shall I call it?—a decided tendency to go her own way, in preference to anybody else's.'

'But, Harry, I do not want to dictate or interfere; I only want to help her.'

'Exactly, my love; and that is just what she is most likely not to allow for an instant. But try, if you like, for you cannot do much harm, even if you do but little good.'

Poor encouragement this! Emma concealed her disappointment, and quietly let the matter drop. She consoled herself with the hope that Mr. Randolph would do something, if she did not.

'From the look of his face, and the grasp he gave my hand,' thought she, 'I am quite sure he will try; and I have no business to be meddling unasked. Harry is always right in the end, though rather provoking in the beginning.'

She was not mistaken in one opinion, whatever she might have been in another. Sleep was chary of its favours to Maurice Randolph the night after that conversation. It was late before he attempted to court them, and when he did, it was not so easy to lay the spirits from the vasty deep of memory and thought, as he had found it to call them up. Henry Lyndon's narrative had moved him more than he could have believed possible; and a keen sense of self-reproach added its sting to many others. If he had only been more patient, if he had made more allowance for impetuosity of temper, or faults of education, they might have parted in anger, but not irrevocably; and

when his prosperity came, he might have honourably entered the lists, and made one bold effort to snatch the priceless jewel from the destiny in store. Oh! if he had, how different had that destiny been!

'As *my* wife,' he thought, again and again, 'she should never have been exposed to the contempt and anger of her family, or anybody else. No finger should have dared to point her out as the disobedient, wilful daughter, who threw herself away on a man unable to appreciate her value, or support her in her proper position. Openly, in the face of the sun, should she have been made my own; and once mine, how would I not have fenced in her path with tenderness and watchful care—shielded her, thought for her, striven for her, if necessary; or, if her ambition aimed to rise, gone upward in spite of the whole world's opposition, and carried her with me, or died! Dreams, dreams all! She never cared whether I died or lived, and never will. All she had to give was flung away on that brainless piece of selfishness in a red coat, who made her sacrifice her whole life, first to his mad passion, and then to his spendthrift folly! Ah, poor fellow! it is hard to revile the dead: but I am glad I know the real version of the case, and not only my friend Miss Lyndon's. Yes, I can well imagine what an agony that proud spirit must have passed through before it stooped to deceive; and in what a web of sorrow and difficulty she has been struggling in ever since; with no one to help her—scouted, neglected, or worried out of her life by them all. And because she had not trouble enough, I must needs add to her store. But it is all for the best; but for that unlucky letter,

I should not have known what I do now. I see my way at last to revenge; and it shall be such as a heart like hers will feel, till it ceases to beat; a revenge worthy both of herself and me.'

Acting on this new principle with the energy he invariably flung into every fresh scheme, the next morning was devoted to reconnoitring the ground he proposed to occupy. A few leading inquiries, a little study of the Red Book and Court Guide, a conversation with one or two of those convenient acquaintances who know everything about everybody that *is* anybody, put Randolph in possession of sufficient facts and particulars to enable him to commence operations, by sending up his card at the house of Mrs. Marsden in Bryanstone Square. He had great doubts as to his being remembered by this old lady; but in the siege he was commencing, it seemed a desirable outpost to secure, and he had no intention of being daunted by a repulse. It was just as well he had not, for when he was ushered into the darkened drawing-room, where old Mrs. Marsden, somewhat stouter than when he saw her last, was seated with her companion, a young lady of sixteen, it was plain she did not know him in the least. Her curtsey was that of good-natured indifference, and her look expressed distinctly that she was perfectly aware he was a begging-letter writer, swindler, impostor, or madman; but that as a matter of breeding, she chose to treat him as a gentleman, and hoped he would behave as one.

'I was afraid you would hardly remember me, Mrs. Marsden,' said Randolph, advancing fearlessly; 'my change of name and appearance are sufficient to account for it.'

The old lady took up her trumpet, and turned to her companion.

'What does he say about change and accounts? Want a subscription, eh?

The young lady, blushing and smothering an intense desire to laugh, repeated Randolph's words through the trumpet. He bowed, and thanked her with a smile.

'Changed his name?' repeated Mrs. Marsden. 'Ask him what it was, my dear.'

The young lady offered the trumpet to the visitor, but was stopped.

'Don't want people shouting at me that I know nothing about,' she said, sinking her voice to what she innocently believed to be a careful whisper. 'Speak civilly to him, and ask him what his name was.'

'Maurice Gray,' said Randolph, in answer to the young lady's embarrassed glance.

'Maurice Gray,' repeated the old lady, shaking her head, when this was transmitted to her ear; 'pooh, nonsense, my dear child, the man has been dead and buried these ten years.'

'Indeed?' said Randolph, as Miss Brittan demurely turned to him for an explanation. 'No wonder then he is forgotten; but living or dead, *he* does not forget old kindnesses at Mrs. Marsden's hands, nor at those of his earliest friend, General Conway.'

The tone in which this was spoken arrested the old lady's attention, her deafness being of a somewhat wilfully intermittent character, utterly baffling all reasonable calculation. She turned briskly to Miss Brittan, whose pretty mouth would not remain grave, do what she might.

'Pull up the blinds, my dear, and let me see his face. Ah!' after a pause of deliberate examination, when a little daylight had been admitted; 'so it is; sit down, sir, if you please.' And she put the trumpet into his hand, and composed herself into an attitude of attention. Randolph, who knew her ways of old, though they had increased in peculiarity with her infirmities, tried to forget how hard Miss Brittan was trying not to laugh, and waited to be questioned.

'Whose name?' was the first in the category.

'My uncle's.'

'Fortune with it?'

'Yes, Mrs. Marsden.'

'Right; not much good without. Married?'

'No.'

'Mean to—?'

'Certainly not.'

'Eh?' The trumpet was lowered, and the old lady sat considering; Miss Brittan, profiting by the unusual daylight, became absorbed in a long strip of embroidery, and shook visibly behind her work-box. Randolph waited with marvellous patience, and presently his examination was renewed.

'Where have you been?'

'Travelling for the last ten years.'

'Where are you staying?'

'At the Waterloo.'

'Seen Charlotte Conway yet?'

'No.'

'Nor Lady Delaunay?'

'I have not had that honour.'

'Remember the old general?'

'I revere his memory.'

'Indeed then, you might have thought of him sooner, and not have thrown him over as you did, Mr. Maurice Gray. He took it very unkind of you, I can tell you that. Miss Brittan, my dear, the cat seems uneasy in her sleep; just soothe her a little, will you?'

Miss Brittan put down her work, and lifting a sleepy, sleek tabby on to her lap, commenced a series of disguised torments on the ill-fated animal, with a most painstaking expression of face, as if its happiness and moral culture were the dearest objects of her existence. Mrs. Marsden put up her trumpet again.

'Charlotte Conway not married yet.'

'Ah!' said Randolph, dubiously.

'She is not so young as she was.'

Randolph tried to look surprised, but not with the best success.

'She lives with her aunt now; she comes here very often, and sits with me while that child goes out for a walk. Is pussy happy with you, Miss Brittan, my dear?'

Miss Brittan, who had by this time nearly reduced the cat to a species of insanity, from fruitless efforts either to sleep or to get away, looked up with a most benevolent smile, but meeting Randolph's eye, became suddenly and surprisingly grave.

'The young man—Delaunay—comes here sometimes. Remember him, Mr. Gray?'

Randolph explained they had never met.

'Ah! but you remember his sister?'

That was quite another thing; though he could not answer so indifferently but that Miss Brittan's eyes rose for a minute, and her ears pricked up with great increase of interest.

'They tell me Delaunay is wonderfully clever—perhaps he is. He is gone somewhere to see an eclipse or something—obliged to be there to make sure it is done right, I suppose. I have a notion the world went round before he was born, and will go on when he is buried; but then I don't understand those things. It's not the way his father showed his cleverness, or his mother either, for that matter; but it is no affair of mine or yours.'

This Randolph could not dispute, and a silence ensued. The old lady, as before, was the first to speak.

'Plenty of changes since your time.'

He bowed assent.

'We were a merry party, you young ones and we old. All broken up now; the general gone—you gone—dear little Ada gone—ah, dear me! and here I am, obliged to that child there for a young face to look at. I must have something young and pretty near me, and Mary Delaunay was kind enough to send me one of her pets. She has a regular tribe of them, and finds situations and homes for them all; does not she, Miss Brittan, my dear?'

Randolph liked the saucy eyes all the better for the sincerity with which they confirmed her prompt assent. He made some courteous remark on Lady Delaunay's well-known discernment and knowledge of character; and added, he believed she had ceased to take any part in politics. Mrs. Marsden heard him this time without the trumpet, and prevented her young companion from answering.

'Yes, and a good thing too; women are best out of those things, but she is as busy as ever she was. How she can stand it, I have no idea, but what with her

schools, and her churches, and her young people, and the letters she has to write, and the visits she makes in all sorts of disagreeable places, and one thing and another, she never has a minute, I am sure, to sit down and be comfortable. I know it would kill me in a week. I understand what it all means, though, stupid as I am. Ever since that poor dear child—Miss Brittan, my dear, I am sadly afraid the poor cat is not the thing. Bring her to me.'

Miss Brittan complied demurely. Randolph started up, and relieved her of her interesting burden, which he established comfortably on his own knee. 'I am known already as a doctor of some repute,' he told Mrs. Marsden, 'and I am an experienced practitioner among pet animals.' Then, after caressing and seriously examining the sleek creature, who eyed him with a touching resignation that seemed to say, 'Isn't it a shame they won't let me alone?' he gravely took up the trumpet. Mrs. Marsden was all attention.

'What is it?'

'Decidedly feverish,' said Randolph, oracularly. 'Wants air.'

'Does it? Poor thing! how very odd—and I am so afraid of the cold. Miss Brittan, my dear, would it be asking too much if you would take pussy into another room, and give her a little fresh air at the window? Perhaps you would not mind fanning her a little if she should not get better soon.'

'Oh, not at all, ma'am,' said the young lady, as she resumed her charge, now mewing disconsolately; and with a merry glance at Maurice, veiled in an instant by the deepest gravity and reserve, vanished with surprising readiness.

The advantage thus gained, Randolph lost no time in following up; a little dexterity steered the conversation, *viâ* cats in general and bygone favourites in particular, to their old days and the household circle of General Conway; when he soon discovered that 'little Ada,' as she always called Lady Adelaide, still retained a place in her kinswoman's affections, and was regretted and yearned over as much as her easy, contented nature could regret or yearn.

'They tell me she behaved very ill, and I suppose she did. One can't defend the imprudence of that marriage; but, dear me, young people will be silly—mad sometimes; and you generally find the elders have been more or less to blame. And so it was in this case; the child doted on her mother, and yet saw very little of her; Mary Delaunay is a clever creature and a good creature, but even she cannot do everything and be everywhere at once; and while she was keeping the world in order, that poor young thing's head ran wild, I suppose, on her own romantic notions. We often wished you had stayed with us, Mr. Gray; you had more influence with her than any one else, and we all remarked how much she felt your leaving.'

'*I* had influence with her?' repeated he, hastily.

Mrs. Marsden put up her trumpet. 'Eh? what's that?'

'What influence could I have?'

'Well, you surprise me. You must have been blind or wonderfully modest not to see how much she cared for your good opinion. I only know she quite took it to heart that you should despise her, as she told me you did.'

'Did she say *I* despised her? What made her imagine such a thing?'

'How should I know? Your own behaviour, I suppose. And it quite puzzled me; for to tell you a little bit of a truth, that it don't matter your knowing now, the general and I differed about you—as to which of the girls you liked the most. I had a notion you were partial to Ada, and he was positive it was Charlotte.'

'Good heavens!' cried he, starting, as the blood mounted into his face. She eyed him intently through her spectacles, with her trumpet half raised.

'Well, Mr. Gray—or whatever your name is—you seem mightily confounded. It was nothing so very astonishing, and I can only say, we both agreed the girls might do worse—and so they have, you see; for Ada married badly, and Charlotte hasn't married at all. If the Delaunays had chosen to push you, you had headpiece enough to hold your own, and might have been at the top of the tree by this time, which Bertram will never be, let his mother sigh over him as long as she pleases.'

'You forget the difference of rank, Mrs. Marsden. The world in general would not have been so liberal as the good general and yourself; and I am sure Lady Delaunay would not.'

'Eh? no, I suppose not. And as you were always as proud as Lucifer, you were pleased to go off in a fit of grand indignation because you thought other people did not or would not appreciate you, I suppose; for I never could hear the rights of it. I only know you left us all uncomfortable; the general quite put out, and the girls out of spirits. We were never so happy again

as when you were with us. Ah, I have often thought about you; yes, I have, and wondered whether you were alive and remembered your old friends; and I seem to have several things I wanted to tell you, or show you, or something—but I am getting very old, and I cannot always remember.'

She took off her glasses, wiped her eyes, and pressed her forehead, as if her memory was a little confused. Randolph waited patiently, and when she seemed inclined to listen, assured her with great kindness and sincerity, that his time was at her disposal, and nothing would gratify him more than that she should make use of him, just as the general would have done. This pleased her very much. 'That just reminds me of what I wanted, and so I will. Do you know, a little while before his death, he was often talking to himself about you—if Maurice Gray were but here, he would see to this, or arrange that; and just when he was near his end, poor dear man, he seemed to be uneasy, and I was sitting by him, and he pointed to his old travelling writing-case—I dare say you remember it—there it is behind you—and he said, "Take care of that; Maurice Gray will help you—" or something of that sort; I am a little hard of hearing, you know, and I couldn't quite make it out; or whether he was wandering, as perhaps he was. But when he was gone, I did open the case, and there were only papers and letters, much too fine for my weak old eyes, so I locked them up again, and there they have been ever since. Now, as you are not dead and buried, as I thought you must be, I should like you to look them over, if you will, and see if there is anything particular in them. I should not like them to fall into anybody else's hands when I am gone too.'

While this conversation was taking place, a different scene was going on in the next room, a boudoir, divided by double doors from the drawing-room. Miss Brittan having conveyed the cat thither according to orders, and given her, of her own free goodwill, a little stimulating exercise, in the shape of hunting and chasing under chairs, tables, and other articles of upholstery—had thrown herself on a small sofa, her favourite corner, and was in the act of giving way to one of the longest and dreariest yawns that ever strained mortal lungs, when the sound of wheels stopping at the door roused her with the hope of variety; and the glimpse she got of the carriage made her quickly open the door, and show her smiling face to the visitor as she crossed the passage. This had the desired effect, as the latter instantly dismissed the attending footman, before he could announce her in the drawing-room, and glided into the boudoir.

'Oh, dear Miss Conway!' was her first welcome, 'I am so glad you are come; I was feeling so tired and stupid, I did not know what to do.'

'Poor child,' said Miss Conway, caressing her; 'it is very trying for you, I am sure. Why are you here by yourself?'

'I am airing the cat, Miss Conway.'

'You absurd child, what do you mean?'

'True, I assure you. I was told to bring her here for fresh air; as if anything was ever fresh in this dull house! so, as I am sure I want refreshing too, I have been trying to read, but every book she gives me is so dreadfully *good*, I always go to sleep. Have you—no? —Yes, I am sure you have!—Oh, how kind you are! *Do* let me see!'

Miss Conway indulgently allowed her to seize her velvet bag, and rifle its contents; several small, foreign-looking volumes, and a white paper parcel, which, on being torn open, proved to be one of the prettiest *bonbonnières* in the world, or even in Paris. The young lady clapped her hands, and nearly screamed with delight; but checked herself with a nod at the double door.

'Yes?' said Miss Conway, following the glance, and instinctively dropping her voice; 'any one there?'

'Only a gentleman, and the other door is shut. Oh, Miss Conway! another of those dear, dreadful stories. How happy I shall be! I shall not sleep all night.'

'You see my indulgence gets the better of my prudence, as usual,' said Miss Conway. 'If it were known now that I humoured you in this way—'

'Oh, but nobody knows, or can know. I keep them locked up, and read in bed. She always will have me go early to bed, so I bolt my door, and read half the night. And *pralines*, too; how delicious! Oh, Miss Conway, you are—'

'Well, only take care. If Lady Delaunay knew, I should never hear the last of it, or you either.'

'Would she think it so very wrong to read these?'

'To *have* read them, you mean,' said Miss Conway, coolly. 'Yes, I should be sorry to tell her how many you had read already. It is a breach of rules she never forgives.'

'Oh dear!' sighed Miss Brittan, laying the tempting volume down; 'well, then, I think I won't.'

'As you please about this one; it will make little or no difference, that I can see. You may remember I advised you not, at the beginning.'

'Yes, you did; but—'

'But I was persuaded to indulge you, out of pity for your dulness here, thinking my aunt would make allowances for so young a person shut up with an old one.'

'Yes, indeed!'

'Ay; but I find she thinks you ought to be as happy and grateful as the day is long, taking a pride and a pleasure in waiting on so kind an old lady, and her cat—'

'Ah, that plague of a cat! Does Lady Delaunay think I ought to be dragging her about whenever Mrs. Marsden fancies she is fidgety?'

'Yes; she considers it your duty to do whatever gives her satisfaction; and I suppose it is. You seem vastly attentive to pussy, as far as I can see.'

'Bringing her in here? Oh, that was only a trick of *his* to get me out of the room, *I* know. He had something private he wanted to talk about.'

'He? The gentleman there now? What is his name?'

'Well, he has two, it appears. His card came up as Mr. Randolph, but he introduced himself as Mr. Maurice Gray. Are you ill, Miss Conway? You look so white; can I get you anything?'

'Yes, dear, I am rather faint; I have not been well lately; a drop of sal-volatile, if you have such a thing—'

'If I have not, Mrs. Marsden has, upstairs,' said her young friend, hastening away in some alarm.

Miss Conway breathed freer when she was alone, but the pulsation of her heart was painfully disturbed. She pressed her hands to her temples, moved hastily to the inner door between the apartments, opened it

cautiously, and drew near the outer one. It was but a moment's waiting, and any doubts she might have entertained were dispelled. His voice could not be mistaken, though unheard so long. Tears, such as rarely moistened those worldly lids, too well accustomed to study self-interest for to have time or taste for ebullitions of feeling, rolled down her cheeks as she leaned against the door; and for a moment it seemed as if she must let loose, in one wild passionate cry, all that had been choked and crushed in her heart and memory, but never destroyed or rooted out. The force of habit strengthened her to forbear, and she listened on, with straining ears, and as she did so, her face changed; the gentler passion chased away by an emotion akin to terror. How long she might have stood there entranced is doubtful, for Miss Brittan's voice at her elbow made her start, with a guilty sense of detection. She came back into the boudoir with a forced smile.

'You were so long, my dear, I was nearly going in without you. When I got so far, however, the room seemed to turn round with me, and I was obliged to stand still to recover. Thank you. I expect Lady Delaunay to join me here presently; so if you have anything to prepare before she comes—'

Miss Brittan hesitated a moment, caught up her French books, and hid them in a table-drawer.

'There, I can't help it. I am in for it now, and if I should be blamed as much whether I kept this one or not, I may as well have the enjoyment.'

'That is your own affair, my dear, entirely. I shall do my best to prevent you being blamed, you may depend, as long as I think you deserve my pro-

tection. I believe you consider me your friend, do you not?'

'Oh yes, of course.'

'And you keep my wishes in mind, when I am not here?'

'Do I not, when there is not a letter comes to her that I do not get a peep into for you, and you know it.'

'Well, I know you do *her* that service; for she is so liable to be imposed upon, it is quite necessary some one should be on the watch to protect her interests. Has she been talking of—of *me*, lately?'

'She mentioned you just now.'

'Yes; and in what way?'

'She told Mr. Randolph that you were not married yet, and that you were not so young as you were.'

Miss Conway bit her lip, and forced a laugh. 'He is an old acquaintance, and knows her blunt ways. Tell me all that passed, before I go in and see if he remembers me.'

The young lady repeated with the accuracy of frequent practice the conversation, as far as she had heard it.

'And after you came in here, my dear, did you happen to overhear any more?'

'I never listen at the doors, Miss Conway.'

'Quite right, my love: but without listening one may hear sometimes, as one may keep one's own counsel in some little matters we wot of, without exactly telling untruth. You are *quite sure* you overheard nothing more?'

'Well, once, when I got up to shut the door this side, I did just hear her say in her shrill way something

about one being sure it was Ada, and the other it was Charlotte—but that was all.'

'I shall go in at once,' said Miss Conway, stifling a sigh of oppression. She was beginning to feel she had heard enough. The next moment she was advancing with outstretched hands to greet her old friend, and welcome him back to England.

Randolph had risen to take leave, with three small packets in his hand, which he thrust into his coat pocket, as he returned her greeting. She smiled, to show she noticed the action; and taxed him gaily with resuming his old business-like habits, as if by instinct, directly he came among them again.

'You do not mean to say, Mrs. Marsden, that you have been giving Mr. Gray—I beg Mr. Randolph's pardon—the old name is so strong in its associations—that you have been giving him work to do on his first visit! That is really too bad, I must say.'

Nobody answered this sally: Mrs. Marsden's deafness had suddenly returned, and Mr. Randolph looked politely uncommunicative. The writing-case stood on the table, evidently just emptied. She glanced curiously into it, and then at his face. 'My poor uncle's papers,' she said softly.

'I have not yet examined them,' was his cautious reply.

'Ah, you were always a diplomatist: there was no penetrating into your secrets of old, I know. But may I request the favour, if you should meet with anything that you think I ought to know, that you will call and tell me? Perhaps I may be a diplomatist too; for now you cannot in ordinary civility escape calling, at any rate.'

There was no resisting so much friendliness and cordiality. He thought of his first evening at Canny-

moor Manorhouse, and the different manner of his recognition, as he reseated himself by Miss Conway's side, and they fell into sociable conversation: Mrs. Marsden, with a murmur about seeing after poor pussy, having trotted off, and left them to themselves.

Miss Conway's curiosity about his travels would not be satisfied with a few summary replies; and she assured him, nothing short of a full and graphic history, according to old classical precedent, would content her. 'As for my aunt Delaunay, who will be here directly, and whom you must wait to see—she will be charmed with you, and them; only be prepared for puzzling questions about physical geography, and antiquities, and all the dry part of a traveller's journal, which would never occur to poor simple minds like mine. *I* only want to know your own personal fortunes—"the battles, sieges, perils you have passed—" in which, no doubt, you quite forget old days, and those old friends, who have never forgotten *you*, or ceased to wish you happiness and a safe return.'

He shook his head. '*I* forget, Miss Conway? I have often wished I could. And to be remembered so kindly, was more than I could either expect or hope to deserve. I have found so many changes in people and in things, that I am made painfully sensible how changed I myself must be.'

'Yes, you are changed,' she said, in a low voice; 'but only as time developes without really altering. The moment you smile I see my old tutor again—the "guide, philosopher, and friend" of some of my happiest days, before I knew the cold-heartedness and selfishness of human hearts, as I have had but too much cause to know them since. Times are changed with

some of us, indeed, Mr. Randolph. I have much that I could tell, relying on you, as I feel I can do—but not *here:* the day is past when I was mistress, so to speak, of a home; I must now consult the wishes and whims of others, and be whatever it pleases them best I should be. You know how my uncle left his property?'

'No, indeed; but attached as he was to you, I conclude you inherited a considerable share.'

'No wonder you thought so. What will you say when I tell you that, with the exception of a few bequests to myself and some others, the whole went to old Mrs. Marsden, with power to leave it as she pleased? Can you conceive anything so unjust—so cruel?'

'I am surprised, indeed.'

'Since then, I have resided with my aunt, Lady Delaunay. I felt it my duty to devote myself to her in her loneliness; but it is a trying life after the one in which you remember me. She has the warmest benevolence, and the most indefatigable energy, and will do anything for you—if you follow her lead; but once cross her plans, differ from her in opinion, violate, however unintentionally, her slightest command—and it is all over with you. It is her rule never to forgive. Perhaps such severity is to be accounted for, by the provocations she has received in the tenderest point.'

She glanced quietly but keenly at her companion. He looked very grave and attentive: there was no doubt of his being interested. After a pause she resumed, in a tone expressive of deep feeling, 'You left us so suddenly that memorable day, I had no time to say half I felt; but indeed, I knew not till afterwards—forgive my referring to a subject so painful' (for in spite of his self-command, the blood had rushed to his brow),

'but when I learnt, as soon I did, what had passed between you, and how your honourable and sensitive nature had been treated, it was all I could do not to track you out, wherever you had hidden yourself, and tell you there was *one* friend at least whose heart swelled at your wrongs—whose hand was ready and eager to avenge them! I felt this, Mr. Randolph, as a woman does, who can only *feel*, and may not act. But had I been a man, and either received such an injury myself, or seen my friend so injured, thoughts and words should not have sufficed me—what I *felt* should have been shown by what I *did!*'

Her eyes flashed as they met those of Randolph, now looking very serious, almost stern, as he bowed in silent acknowledgment.

'It led to a coolness between us,' she resumed, presently, after waiting in vain for him to speak, 'and though, after a time, we were reconciled—my nature being always for peace, if possible—yet it opened my eyes to defects of character to which I had been hitherto blind; and the wretched affair that happened afterwards, grieved, distressed me, made me ill—but was not really a surprise. One who could behave so *once*, could do it again; and after wronging so cruelly a heart like yours, the next step was to break her mother's—as broken it would have been, I am sure, but for *me*. And for such a man, too!—a good-looking, conceited, empty-headed young puppy, whom I could never endure; for though he was introduced to us by one of our friends in his regiment, I soon found he belonged to a vulgar family—actually, some are connected with trade—tallow-chandlers, for what I know. Imagine such a match for a Chester! but there is

no accounting for tastes, and I believe she is devoted to them and their ways—become quite one of themselves, which is perhaps the wisest thing she can do. Of course *our* intercourse is over, except by letter. I show her what kindness is in my power, and have stood between her and her family's anger often and often: but that is all any one can do; she has chosen her path in life, and we can only deplore her choice, and hope it makes her happy.'

The conversation was here interrupted by the return of Mrs. Marsden, followed immediately after by the entrance of Lady Delaunay. It was with peculiar feelings of interest that Randolph found himself in the presence of this lady, in whom he at once recognised the accuracy of Henry Lyndon's description. Small, thin, fragile in figure, with piercing grey eyes, rather deeply set, and silky white hair that had once been a delicate brown, her face would anywhere have commanded attention, and her bearing respect; but that which impressed those she met had little to do with either. The gift of ruling others is as special a gift as genius or beauty, and it sat on Lady Delaunay's brow as lightly and unconsciously as the snow of her threescore and five winters, but unmistakeable as the circlet of royalty. Her dignity was the more striking from the absence of all external adjuncts; for her dress was remarkable for nothing but sober colours, and a neatness that was almost precision; and her manner, instead of repelling by coldness and hauteur, was winning from its kindliness and ease. Yet the moment her eye was felt, its sovereignty was felt too. Many an audacious spirit, that would have gone into the breach of a beleaguered city as to a pastime, had

quailed and shrunk before its quiet penetration; while many a wavering purpose had grown into life, and many a despairing struggle into glad success, through a word of praise, a smile of encouragement, from lips that never praised lightly or in vain. Circumstances and policy might make her a constitutional ruler; but nature and inclination had intended her for a despot of the highest order—that, like the sun, would shine to fructify and enlighten—but like him, too, shine alone.

She had heard of Randolph often, though they had never met; and as soon as she understood who it was that was so warmly introduced, addressed him, not as a stranger, but as an old family friend; made him sit down by her side, and told him how much her uncle had said in his praise—thanking him for past kindnesses and attention to one she had loved so well. Then she led him on, imperceptibly, to talk on various subjects, drawing him out as only she knew how to do, till he found himself unawares exerting his powers, and doing his utmost to win one of those quick, approving glances, that never failed to mark whatever was worth noting. She possessed to perfection that secret of popularity, which consists in making those you converse with show themselves to the best advantage; and instead of lightly touching on general topics, and waiting to see how much or how little others knew, which Randolph in the security of conscious power was rather fond of doing, he was insensibly led to produce his own stores, varied, often quaint, and rich from large reading and observant travel—conscious that he was appreciated, and yet not conscious, till afterwards, how much he had been influenced by that appreciation.

In spite of all the charm of such converse, however,

he found himself, more than once, forgetting subject, speaker, and scene—either in the thought of what one aching heart, far away, would give, for one of those smiles—or losing what she said in the earnest contemplation of what she was. It would have been difficult to believe this could be Adelaide's mother—unlike as they were in complexion, in height, in form; but for the shape and character of the mouth, so fascinating in its smile—so calmly resolute when at rest—so imperious in its curves when its passions were aroused. This, the soft voice, and the grace of movement, reminded him of the daughter again and again; and now he began to understand what that daughter's suffering had been under such a mother's anger. Was that anger implacable?—could that suffering be removed?—were questions that forced themselves so urgently at every word Lady Delaunay spoke, that he answered at last very much at random, and discovered to his confusion, that he had just been expressing the warmest interest in the subject of female education and improvement—assenting unreservedly to something Lady Delaunay had said, but without an idea what it could be. He had presence of mind enough to cover his momentary inattention, by throwing himself with extra zeal into the educational cause; and as the acutest minds are not exempt from the illusion, that what we are interested in ourselves must interest everybody else, she readily believed him to be in earnest.

He found he had lighted on a subject nearest to her heart, and the earnestness that had been assumed grew into reality. He told her he had been meditating how best to return the hospitalities he had lately received in a retired country district; and it had

occurred to him he could not do better than build them a new school-house, which would be available for lectures, &c., when required. It was only a vague idea so far; but any advice Lady Delaunay's great experience could afford, would be most valuable. She listened attentively, and with evident pleasure; but before she would give an opinion, asked him, with a kindness that could not offend, if he was quite sure he had no nearer claims on his fortune to satisfy *first*.

'Whoever comes to me for counsel in their good deeds, Mr. Randolph, must always expect this seemingly officious question. I have a wholesome dread of *Corban*, whether it be in the shape of time or money.'

'I have no claims on me, madam; I am alone in the world.'

'*Alone?*' repeated Miss Conway, in a tone of mild reproach.

'Alone?' said Lady Delaunay, with a shake of the head; 'that is a dreary, and I trust, a rare solitude. But *you* have your happiness yet to build; make up your mind well, before you undertake a work in which it is not easy to calculate nicely beforehand, or to stop when you once begin.'

'My mind is made up. My happiness must be made, if made at all, where Lady Delaunay finds hers—in being useful to others.'

She put her hand on his arm. 'Learn two things, my dear sir, since you are not above learning from an old woman's experience. One is, not to overpraise on hearsay—and the other, to expect anything you please from these undertakings—recreation, instruction, employment—good to others—but not happiness to your-

self. Now I have delivered my conscience, you may command me; I shall have the greatest pleasure in plundering you to the utmost.'

The subject was then entered into with genuine zest and good-will; so many points, however, had to be considered, that Lady Delaunay was not long in deciding that the person who could give Mr. Randolph the best advice was her own parish clergyman, with whom she had an appointment that afternoon; and as whatever was to be done, had better always be done at once, there was a seat in her carriage at his service, if he would accept it. Whatever procured him a nearer insight into her character was so valuable at that moment, that he accepted the offer with gratitude. This being settled, Lady Delaunay looked suddenly round the room. 'Where is my little friend, Miss Brittan?'

'Well, I went to call her just now,' said Mrs. Marsden, 'and the child was so deep in her studies, she never heard or saw me; so I e'en let her be. Girls were not so fond of their books when *I* was young; *that* came on in your time, Mary, and this child is one after your own heart there.'

'It is the first I have heard of it,' said Lady Delaunay, with a smile, 'and I own to a little incredulity in such sudden conversions. Is she in the next room?'

She was rising as she spoke, when Miss Conway hastily prevented her, and begged to save her the trouble. As she expected, she found the young lady absorbed, heart and soul, in the first volume of her new book. Miss Conway's hand on her shoulder made her bound in her chair.

'Lady Delaunay is waiting to see you, and to know

what those studies can be that make you blind and deaf to all sublunary matters.'

'Oh, goodness, what shall I do?—what shall I say? Will she be very angry, really?'

'Why do you ask, when you know as well as I do, that she *never* forgives an act of disobedience? Not that you are bound to obey her all your life; but she considers herself your guardian, more or less, and that implies dictation.'

'Oh, she is so good to me, I love to obey her generally; but I dare not tell her this, indeed I dare not. I wish I had never seen one of the books!'

'Then I had better take these away.'

'No, no; now I have begun, I *must* see the end. Such a dreadful part just coming; I was so interested! Oh, Miss Conway, cannot you help me out of this scrape? I will do anything in the world for you, if you will!'

'Well, I will try, my dear; I believe you are a grateful little thing, so come along; put a brave face on the matter, and I will stand your friend. You promise to abide by whatever I say for you, and to do whatever I set you to do?'

'Oh, yes, yes,' said the frightened girl, hastily thrusting her forbidden pleasure again into the drawer, and endeavouring to smooth her features down into a look of unconcern and innocence. At Miss Conway's suggestion she took up the cat, and this gave her something to do with her hands and eyes, while her companion desired her only to put on her most amiable looks, and leave the rest to her.

Lady Delaunay rose as they entered, and greeted her *protegée* with more than her usual kindness.

'Mrs. Marsden has been telling me she is afraid you are too much in these warm rooms, my dear; and that it is dull for you. You are grown studious, too, it seems; is that true?'

'She will be ashamed to own the truth,' said Miss Conway, laughing; 'but I suspect the warm rooms are in the secret; for I found her most undeniably asleep over —shall I tell, Lilla? No, that would not be fair. Don't you think she looks rather pale, my dear aunt?'

'She does not look herself, certainly; a drive will do her good. May I take her out with me, Mrs. Marsden?'

'With all my heart, my dear Mary. I am sure she is a good attentive child to me and pussy, and we should be sorry to confine her too closely—shouldn't we, pussy? Give her to me, my dear, and get ready, and stay away as long as you like. I am afraid you are not well.'

'Indeed I am,' she answered, choking down a great sob, as she met Lady Delaunay's eyes, watching her with kind anxiety; and she hastened out of the room, glad to have at least one minute's breathing time to wrestle with her conscience.

Miss Conway soon followed her upstairs.

'I am going to stay till you come back, Lilla, and now —by the way, did I not bring you cleverly through your difficulty? Telling a fib, too, in your service, which is your sin, not mine, remember. And now you must be my little representative, and tell me *all* that passes, do you understand? And, Lilla,' her voice sank cautiously, '*she* has given Mr. Randolph some papers that *I* ought to see, and must see somehow, and you must help me. They are in his coat-pocket.'

'But you do not expect me to take them out?'

'Certainly not; do nothing to attract attention; but if by any chance you get a sight of them, or if you are at home when he brings them back, and you hear them discussed—in short, you understand—I leave it all to your ingenuity. One good turn deserves another. Make haste, they are waiting for you.'

CHAPTER XII.

And were she not rebellious breasts to quell,
And were she not her statutes to maintain,
The cot, no more, I ween, were deemed the cell,
Where comely peace of mind and decent order dwell.

SHENSTONE.

IN spite of the pre-occupation of mind that made all subjects but one more or less irksome, it was impossible for Maurice Randolph to be long in the society of Lady Delaunay, and not find himself carried along by the energy of a mind, in so many ways congenial to his own. The interest, forced at first, soon came spontaneously, as his own eyes and ears became witnesses of the practical, judicious benevolence that combined the broadest purposes with the minutest attention to detail; aiming at nothing less than the mental and bodily improvement of a generation, and as the means thereto keeping as vigilant a watch upon health and spirits, as if the highest honours depended on the ability of the pupils to eat, laugh, and play. They visited some schools first, in a very poor district of her parish, and it was soon evident that she was a well-known visitor: her entrance caused no flurry or excitement, only a slight look of anxiety on the part of the mistress, soon relieved by a few kind words of friendly inquiry and commendation; for the first thing

Lady Delaunay did, on entering, was to look round for something to commend, either in the attendance, the atmosphere of the room, or the orderly look of the classes, which seemed to put new life into the teachers, and give them spirit for anything that might ensue. The children, on their parts, followed her with their eyes, which brightened as only children's can, when they met hers. Randolph saw she knew most of them personally, inquired after absent members, sick parents, or new-born brothers and sisters with the air of an old acquaintance; gave orders that one should have a frock, another an order for shoes, this one's mother a bottle of wine, that one's father a loan in money to be repaid by weekly instalments; all as if it were the simplest matter of course; she seemed quite at home among them; and when she took her departure, looked reluctant to go. Randolph handed her to her carriage. 'And is there no happiness to be gathered here?' She turned with her foot on the step, and the quick movement was very like her daughter.

'Comfort, sometimes; hope, often; conscious failure, oftenest of all. As much happiness as such materials will make, I expect and find.'

The footman waited for orders. 'To the Home in —— Street. I am to meet Mr. Powys there, and you will be glad to see your old friends, Lilla, I dare say.'

The Home was an institution of Lady Delaunay's founding, watched and loved by her with peculiar tenderness and care. It was intended for the education of young girls of a superior grade to the last—orphan daughters of poor clergymen, medical men, or any of the educated professions, for whom society offered no

prospect in life, but that teaching and moral training of others they wanted so much themselves. Here the party were received by Lady Delaunay's friend and pastor, Mr. Powys; who having arrived only a minute and a half before them, commenced a spirited attack on ladies' unpunctuality. Lady Delaunay laid all the blame on Mr. Randolph, and forthwith consigned him to his tender mercies, as that rare prize, a philanthropist with money, good-will, and a desire to be guided in the use of them. No one was more ready to put him in the way of spending the one and employing the other than Mr. Powys; and plans and design being produced, and estimates sketched out, a promising outline was in rapid progress—when he suddenly asked his new acquaintance the name of the parish where all this was to be done?

Randolph replied, after a momentary hesitation, that as he had not yet consulted the rector, perhaps it would be premature to give the name of the parish.

'I should think so indeed,' cried Mr. Powys; 'this alters the case entirely; and the first piece of advice I give you, my dear sir, is to get your rector's consent and approval; for till then, I assure you, you will not have mine.'

'You have no choice, Mr. Randolph,' said Lady Delaunay. 'We are all kept in strict discipline here; but, perhaps, it may not be losing time to see something of our arrangements, while I am attending to a little business I have to do. No one can show them so well as Mr. Powys, who is the master here, by merit as well as by right'

There was something rather doubtful in Mr. Powys's smile, as he followed her retiring figure with his eyes;

but he readily undertook to show the visitor over the building, and was zealous in his commendation of its design. Everything, as Randolph failed not to observe, whether in the style of dress, the hours, the method of instruction, or the domestic arrangements, was designed to keep up the self-respect of the pupils, to encourage independence, self-reliance, and energy; and to set their future career before them, not as an object of dread, but of honourable ambition. Randolph was struck with the intelligence of some of their countenances—the quiet sense of readiness and ability that was the fruit of the judicious training they had gone through, making what they had acquired thoroughly and practically their own, to use as they had found needful; not a load of superficial, high-sounding knowledge, veneering their ignorance for the sake of temporary display. For those among them endowed with taste and love of literature, ample means of gratification were provided, as Mr. Powys exultingly pointed out; leading the visitor through the lecture-room, with all its neat and suitable apparatus, to the library, well supplied with the best works, English and foreign; and warming with his theme, he dilated on the care, judgment, and outlay disbursed on the whole by a single individual.

'My only dread is lest she should wear herself out. Though far from strong, she is a very early riser, and never fails to attend our morning service; she is indefatigable in her visits among the poor, and her labours in the schools; and besides all this, there is hardly a charitable institution now-a-days set on foot among ladies, that they do not try to draw her into. Half her day is spent in receiving the reports and

accounts of the different agents of her benevolence—planning, arranging, and writing in behalf of those she endeavours to help on in the world, and in every way curtailing the luxuries and relaxations to which she has been accustomed, that she may have more to give. On the whole, her benevolence is of the sensible, practical character, that thorough knowledge of the world and of human nature produces in a generous disposition; she thinks more like a man than a woman; never wants to take my parish out of my hands, or to overcome rules to gratify feelings; but governs the most liberal of hands by the clearest of heads.'

'Her fortune is large, I presume?'

'It is considerable, but not sufficient to stand all this without much prudence, and what in her station, must be great self-denial. I remarked as much to her once; but she replied that her son had enough, she had no nearer ties or claims on her wealth; was not the happiness of those who had no other protector, well worth the small privations it cost? I could not deny it; I only wish more would follow her example.'

'She must be very much beloved.'

'She ought to be. Do you know the history of that young lady who is with her to-day! Her father cheated Lady Delaunay through thick and thin, as people say—robbed her of thousands, and died in her debt; her mother was a silly extravagant creature, who helped to ruin him, and this young thing, half-educated, was left on the wide world at fourteen, penniless. Lady Delaunay sought her out, and placed her here; but found she was just the kind of girl who was likely to grow the worse for a school; so she placed her a few months ago with her relation, Mrs. Marsden, who wanted a

young companion, and who, being a kind-hearted old lady, allows her plenty of time to improve herself. I only hope she makes good use of it.'

'I hope she does. I suppose Lady Delaunay meets with disappointments at times?'

'Well, yes; we must expect that. The best intentions fail, and the best methods may have their weak points.'

'You say she has spent a great deal of money here; there must have been a great deal of *love* given with it, or it would not have been laid out so well.'

'Love? I do believe she cares for these girls as if they were her own.

'Rather more, I should say.'

Mr. Powys turned sharply to see what this meant.

'When I was in England last,' continued Randolph, 'Lady Delaunay had a daughter.'

'*Had*, sir—true; she can hardly be said to have one now.'

'Whose fault is that?'

'I do not know the particulars of the story; but there can be no question where the fault lies, when such a mother is estranged.'

'Has anything been done to reconcile them?'

'I believe so; but from all I have heard, the offence Lady Delaunay has received is one she will never pardon.'

'What? all this superfluity of kindness and consideration, forbearance and tender care, poured forth upon strangers—and not one drop for that parched and weary heart, that thirsts for it as for a spring of life? I cannot wrong a generous woman so cruelly as to believe it.'

'Do you know Lady Adelaide, then?' asked Mr. Powys, roused by his earnestness, and observing him with some curiosity.

'I know enough of her to tell you *this*—there is not one of those young girls whose heart is so desolate—whose orphanhood so solitary; nor can forty thousand of these, with all their quantity of love and gratitude, make up her sum. The crumbs of tenderness that fall from their table would spread her a feast of rejoicing; there is bread enough and to spare for those in the highways and hedges, and she is perishing with hunger—hunger worse than Jerusalem famine—inasmuch as it takes longer to kill.'

Mr. Powys was silent for a few moments, still watching intently the dark, impassioned features.

'Why do you tell me this, sir?' he asked, presently.

'Because you are Lady Delaunay's friend and counsellor, and it is to you I look to tell her the truth.'

'Pardon me, sir, you mistake; her friend I am, with all my heart, and her counsellor when she asks my advice; but I have never presumed to interfere in her private affairs, and I am quite sure she would be very much surprised if I did.'

'But, sir, if you have a friend you admire and revere, who is willing to make costly exertions of self-denial for good works like these, would you not hold it a sacred duty to teach her, where she offers sacrifice, to offer mercy too?'

'Look here, my dear sir, you are so earnest yourself, you may think me rather cold; but, supposing such a case, I do not think it would be wise of me to do what would set such a friend against the very course I meant her to follow. It is one thing—don't you see?—to

direct a lady's plans of benevolence, and another to take a liberty she could not allow or forgive.'

'So you would rather let a magnanimous woman commit an act of severity—not to say, injustice—which you yourself condemn, than run the risk of offending by telling her of it; rather speak evil of her behind her back than rely on the worth of character for which you give her credit. For my part, I have seen nothing in her to-day that is not so good and gentle, that what you are all afraid of I cannot conceive.'

'Ah!' said Mr. Powys, thrusting his hand briskly through his hair, 'then suppose, my dear sir, you wait till you *can*.'

The entrance of Lady Delaunay broke off the argument at this far from satisfactory point. She was followed by Miss Brittan, the lady resident, and several of the young inmates. These last clustered round their benefactress, eager for a share of her notice. One had a letter to show from a brother she had fitted out for Australia—another had inquiries to make about a delayed ship—every one had some subject on which they craved either her approval, her opinion, or her sympathy; and those whose shyness kept them silent, were soon won by the winning voice, that seemed to know by instinct the very question they longed to ask, and to find exactly the answer required by each; embodying in their minds all that this world could offer in wisdom, power, and benevolence. And Randolph watched, listened, observed, and looked askance at Mr. Powys; Mr. Powys twitched his mouth on one side, and raised his eyebrows.

The letter from Australia had led to some discussion, and the map of the world being spread on the table, an

eager group were pressing round Lady Delaunay, as she pointed out the emigrant's ocean route, and tried to render easier of comprehension why his winter was in June, and his hot weather at Christmas. In the midst of a graphic picture she was setting before them of the perils of the bush, such as they have been so often described—the endless labyrinth—the want of water—the robber lurking in wait—the slow, struggling death of exhaustion—there was a movement among her young listeners, that made her look round in some surprise at the interruption. Mrs. Herbert, with a face betraying much embarrassment and concern, was holding the door against some one without, whose sobbing voice could be heard repeating, 'It is too cruel! I *must* speak to her, and I will!' And as if to second the resolution, came a vehement push at the panels, that well nigh overcame the resistance of the gentle superintendent. All eyes turned in that direction.

'What is the matter?' asked Lady Delaunay, in a slight tone of displeasure.

'Indeed, madam, it is not with my consent, I assure you; it is quite against rules, but I do not know how to be as severe as I ought in a case like hers.'

The door was flung open before she could finish her sentence, and a young girl in the wildest excitement, her features swollen with crying, rushed in, and fell on her knees before Lady Delaunay, pouring out passionate entreaties, like a child in a paroxysm of grief and terror.

'Only forgive me once more—only once—and see if I do not improve! I will, I will, if I slave from morning till night to please you! Oh, Lady Delaunay, I don't know what will become of me if you cast me off

—I am so miserable! Everybody tells me I am disgraced, and nobody will help me, or recommend me, because they say if *you* will not, I must be bad indeed —and what am I to do? I am not so bad as all that, and I am so very, very sorry. Oh! don't turn away from me!—you won't believe me, because I have said so before; but it is true, indeed! Oh, dear Mrs. Herbert, speak for me! Will none of you girls help me with a word? Lilla Brittan—Mr. Powys—dear Mr. Powys, won't you ask her just to try me once more?'

The calm severity of Lady Delaunay's voice checked any inclination that might be arising to respond to this appeal. 'Mr. Powys has too much regard for me to subject me to the mortification of refusing him a request. My young friends *here*, however moved in their feelings, are better brought up than to presume to interfere in such a matter. Mrs. Herbert thinks with me, and knows as well as I do, that such an exhibition as this, would have been spared me by any one who had a correct sense of propriety. Stand up, Miss Unwin; you shock us all by your attitude—I desire you to rise this moment.'

'Not till you have heard me—not till you have forgiven me! Don't tell me you cannot! This house, and all in it, is your own; you have only to say the word, and oh! what a difference it would make to me, so miserable as I am! You should never, never have cause to be angry with me again; I will do anything, bear any punishment, do any work you like—only give me one more trial, dear Lady Delaunay! On my knees I ask, I implore you! I won't let you go without one word of hope; I can't, for if I do, I shall die, I know I shall!'

Her voice had become almost a scream, and it was frightful to see her writhe on the floor, as she clung round Lady Delaunay; who, finding it impossible to free herself without considerable effort, stood perfectly still and unmoved, waiting till she could be heard.

Nobody ventured to interfere; Mrs. Herbert kept her eyes on the ground; the girls huddled together in trembling excitement; Randolph, keenly attentive, watched the calm inexorable severity of the delicate features, and began to have some misgivings that Mr. Powys was not so far wrong. Mr. Powys himself, whose heart had melted directly he saw tears, though he had been as angry as anybody with the offender before, could not help fidgeting, first on one foot, then on the other, and muttering that a kind word would do no harm—the poor thing was sorry, and what more would you have?

A good deal more, if Lady Delaunay's face was to be understood. As soon as she felt, by the relaxing clutch, that the young lady was becoming calm enough to listen, she quietly but decidedly withdrew from her hold, and desired her once more to rise. This time she durst not disobey, and stood sobbing and wringing her hands, till the grave, commanding voice arrested her agitation:—'You have chosen to make this appeal, Miss Unwin, before so many witnesses, therefore before them I answer it; a pain I would otherwise have spared you. You came into this establishment, knowing its rules—you were placed in a position of trust, as being older than many of your companions—you violated that trust, by not only breaking the rules yourself, but leading them to do the same. You were reproved for so doing, once—twice—and would then have suffered the

penalty, but for your professions of amendment. The third time you resorted to falsehood and manœuvre to cover disobedience; and then you were expelled. Now you have felt the consequences, you would come back; and you hope to move me by this painful display of distress. You are mistaken. That you would find the result distressing, I was perfectly aware, and spared you while I could. Once resolved to punish, I *never* change my mind; and I am concerned to think that the discipline of this house is not strict enough to have protected me from exposure to such a scene. Silence! I will hear no more: one third of this vehemence, if employed in your own improvement, would have saved you all this humiliation. Now, leave the house—and do not presume to enter it again without express permission from me.'

Crushed and cowering with the sense of shame and degradation, the unhappy girl turned to obey; but as she reached the door, a sudden reaction seemed to take place; she came back to the middle of the room almost at a bound—every evil passion at work in her features, and perfectly reckless what she said or did, or what might be the result.

'Yes, I will go—and don't be afraid of my asking you to forgive me again. I had heard before that you couldn't forgive—not even your own flesh and blood—and now I believe it. If I can only manage, somehow, to scrape up enough to pay you back every penny I have cost you, I shan't care for anything else; and I will, if I live. I won't be in your debt longer than I can help, and I advise all who hear me to resolve the same!'

A fierce and bitter laugh, choked by a rush of scarcely

more bitter tears—and she was gone. Several of the girls burst out crying as the door slammed after her, and Lady Delaunay, as she glanced round, met nothing but looks of consternation and regret. A slight flush on her cheek betrayed her resentment; she faced them steadily, and her lips quivered when she began to speak. 'Children! I see you think me cruel. So be it. I am used to this, and not for your tears, nor for any suffering disobedience and temper may bring on that unhappy girl, will I go back a step from my determination. Bear this in mind when tempted yourselves. That I am slow to punish, some of you know already: that I punish in earnest when I punish at all, you may all know in future. No one is compelled to remain here a moment longer than she pleases, but while you do remain under my protection, I *will* be obeyed. I will detain you from your avocations no longer. Perhaps, Mrs. Herbert, you would have the goodness to order the carriage round. Mr. Randolph,' turning to him while the girls were hurriedly leaving the room, 'I regret this should have occurred during your first visit. You may take a hint from it, if you will, that may be serviceable in your future plans.'

'I expect he will,' said Mr. Powys. 'He has learnt more from you in five minutes, than I could have made him believe in a month. Well, my dear sir, if it should occur to you that your schemes turn out harder to manage than you thought, remember my best assistance is at your disposal.'

Randolph grasped the offered hand. 'I take you at your word, sir. I see you know better than I, and shall be too glad of your co-operation.'

The significant squeeze Mr. Powys gave to his

fingers was as significantly returned, not unobserved by Lady Delaunay.

'I question whether I should get such a shake of the hand if I asked for it, Mr. Randolph,' she said, with an attempt at a smile. 'If the truth were told, my kind pastor is very angry with me in his heart.'

'As to that, my dear lady,' said he, thrusting his hand into his hair till it stood on end, according to his custom when disturbed in his mind, 'we have long ago made the discovery that we do not always agree in opinion, and that neither of us likes to give up to the other; so the less we say about it the better.'

'You mean that I am wrong now?' her eye kindling, though her voice was calm. 'Say it honestly then; I can bear it.'

'But *I* can't, Lady Delaunay; I am never comfortable when we don't agree. Besides, I do not dispute your right to make what rules you please in your own house, and to enforce them when broken; I only mean *I* could not have stood out as you did—'

'And as I always will, my dear friend, when the good of the many is put in the scale with the feelings, or even the sufferings of *one*.'

'Well, that is your method. I am for letting the ninety and nine take their chance, if I can bring back the hundredth.'

'Not if that lost sheep taint the others.'

'Oh, come, that is a hard word. I know she was very wrong, and I cannot imagine what put it into her head to look at the wretched books—then to show them to the younger ones, and tell lies to hide it—bad, bad, very bad. But she had had a good fright, and a good humbling, and it was just a toss-up whether she would

really mend, or grow harder in self-will. She won't mend in a hurry *now*.'

'I am sorry for it; but a rule that has reason on its side, is worth nothing unless it is kept.'

'Better break fifty rules than one heart. Better lose all your credit for discipline than one chance of saving a soul.'

'Without discipline I can pretend to do nothing. When I have passed a sentence, I never recal it. Forgive my setting up my judgment in opposition to yours; in anything else I am too glad of your advice, but my conscience in this matter must be my guide alone. I am older than you by a sprinkling of winters, and may plead the experience of age in resisting pastoral authority.'

'Yes,' said he, with a smile and a grimace of impatience, 'I knew it would end in that, and I have no more to say; only remember *this*—the older we grow, the less time we have to forgive in, and if life's sun go down upon our wrath—'

She held out her hand, and pressed his earnestly.

'There is none between us, at any rate. And for the rest,' she murmured, as she turned to depart, 'of those who inflict, and those who bear the chastening, it is hard to tell which suffers the most!'

She took Randolph's arm, apparently unconscious that he must have heard her words. Mr. Powys shrugged his shoulders, looked after her wistfully, and then perceiving that he was blocking up Lilla Brittan's way, gave her his arm too.

'What do you say to all this? You are growing quite a young woman now; I hope a wise one too.'

Miss Brittan's troubled conscience could suggest nothing wiser than a titter.

'Well, keep out of these scrapes, whatever you do; for, mind, it will be no use sending for me; I can't get you out of them. Take warning by that silly girl who has thrown away the best friend she ever had, or ever will have—do you hear?—and keep her while you have her.'

'But, Mr. Powys,' faltered Lilla, 'do you think for *one* fault, one little bit of disobedience, now I am not in the school, she would serve me like Belle Unwin?'

'Not if you told her yourself, of your own accord. That is the only chance. So remember, if you are ever unwise enough to do what she has forbidden—which, so long as you are under her generous guardianship, she has a right to do—run and own it directly. Good bye.'

'Oh dear,' thought Lilla, as she got into the carriage, 'how very easy it is to talk!'

Perhaps Lady Delaunay observed some traces of agitation in her features; for she looked at her very kindly, and ordered the coachman to drive round the Park. She herself, sunk in deep and painful thought, remained silent and abstracted for some time, till gradually roused by the increasing animation of the dialogue between her two companions.

Randolph.—'And so that is what you call being a workwoman, Miss Brittan—one inch of calico per diem drilled into holes at regular distances—all the monotony of bean-setting without the prospect of the beans—honeycombing your material like the bees, but forgetting to store any honey in your cells? Call you that working?'

Lilla.—'How absurd you are, Mr. Randolph! What can you know about it?'

Randolph.—'Ah, I know more about ladies' work than they like me to tell. They deal now in nothing but shams; imitation of old carving—imitation of old china—imitation of old lace; and the carving is made of old shoes and glue, and the china of old bottles and green paint, and the lace of whatever you please—but such as it is, our great-grandmothers would have scorned to put the best of it on the bachelor's pincushion; much more on their own lappets and ruffles. Ah! if you could but see some that I have by me, you would fancy yourself back in the days of the long-peaked stomachers and hoops, and sacques, and brocade, and powder: that golden age when young ladies rose at six, made their own beds and the puddings of the family, sewed stout Irish linen instead of little round holes in cambric, and never spoke till they were spoken to, or came into a room without a curtsey to the company. Halcyon days! when will ye return?'

Lilla.—'Not in my time, I hope. I hate early rising, and should never touch another pudding if I had to make it, nor anybody else either; and I must talk when I like, or not at all. But tell me about this lace—how did you get it, and why?'

Randolph.—'That is rather a long story; have you patience to hear it?'

Lilla.—'Oh, there is nothing I like so well. I would rather have the worst story than the most improving book of history you could name. I mean,' colouring suddenly, 'not the *worst* exactly, but what wise people call silly, and far-fetched, and all that sort of thing; which I hope yours is.'

Randolph.—'Hem—well, not exactly as you say, though I agree in thinking many things that are

interesting to some, would appear silly enough to others. My story, remember, is true.'

Lilla.—'That is a great pity; but if it is not too sensible, it will not signify; only begin with, Once upon a time.'

'Once upon a time, then,' began Randolph, emphatically, 'there were a mother and a daughter.'

Lady Delaunay turned her head so quickly as almost to throw him off his guard; but recovering himself in an instant, he proceeded as if nothing had occurred. He was an artful story-teller, and painted with considerable effect the series of scenes he laid before them: the quiet village home left for the temptations of service, the temptations yielded to, the struggles of the unaided weakness, the punishment, the repentance, the refused pardon, the gradual downfall afterwards—to that moment when a miserable death seemed at hand, and a presence as of an angel's stood between the destroyer and the victim. His voice faltered here, as he went on to describe the tenderness, the compassion of that unnamed Samaritan; the quiet resting-place in which, through her care, the wanderer was now sheltered, with bodily comforts and spiritual instruction within her reach, and no longer without hope, either for this world or the next; and then when the interest of both listeners was firmly fixed, as much by his manner of telling it as by the story itself, he suddenly broke off with the query—'And how was all this to be paid for? The lady is a widow of slender income, and had no long charity-purse at her disposal. So she gave what she had—some rare valuable old lace, that had been in her family a long time, and which she had hoarded as an heirloom;—and as she would not allow of assistance in any other way, I was obliged to do, as ladies do at

a benevolent bazaar of fancy-work, when they give half-a-crown in charity, and get a pen-wiper by way of certificate—I bought the lace, and her pensioners are supported on the money.'

'Oh, Lady Delaunay!' cried Lilla, 'did you hear that? Was it not being really generous?'

Lady Delaunay smiled a hearty assent. 'I could envy that noble sacrifice; it is one I much doubt my being able to make myself.'

'Oh, but then your lace is so very, very beautiful. No one could bear to part with *that*.'

'I believe I can safely challenge even Lady Delaunay to produce any more beautiful than mine,' said Randolph.

She looked good-humouredly incredulous, as if pardoning the presumption of ignorance. The lace she alluded to had been long in her family, too, and was well-known and highly valuable. Granted, but *this* was equal to the finest in the kingdom. His pertinacity amused, while it almost provoked her. Seeing was believing; she must see and compare it herself, before she could be brought to believe. Randolph asked nothing better.

'So confident am I in your judgment,' he said, 'that I would stake the lace itself on the issue.'

'You would?'

'Willingly. What? your ladyship doubts my sincerity? I claim a fair trial and an open field. Will you accept the challenge?'

'Oh, do, do!' cried Lilla, clapping her hands.

'Nay, I claim it as a right,' persisted he; 'for Lady Delaunay's doubts impugn either my skill or my credit. In either case my reputation is libelled, Miss Brittan,

and you are a witness of my wrongs; and if I am refused honourable satisfaction, I shall appeal to Ariel and his fifty nymphs. No lady will allow me a voice in a committee of dress, or trust me with a commission beyond a paper of pins. Extensive knowledge, world-wide experience, honeyed eloquence in the great cause, all will be in vain. I shall be set down among the crowd of know-nothings who are not worth taking into a shop, and every milliner's apprentice will laugh me to scorn.'

'A sad picture,' said Lady Delaunay; 'distressing as that of Misocapelus in the "Rambler," when the ladies preferred the anecdotes of the Templar and the colonel, to his opinion on the silver breast-knot and the carnation shot with white. But sooner than such gifts as yours should be lost, have your own way, by all means. Bring me your purchase, and if I do not think it equal to your report, I shall be happy to keep it.'

'But if it is, what will you do for me in return?'

'What you please.'

'Miss Brittan, I am a made man; that promise opens to me the treasures of Boabdil el Chico. Lady Delaunay, who never retracts her word, will give me whatever I ask. I feel an alarming covetousness taking possession of me; my imagination expands like Alnaschar's; woe is me if it mislead me in like manner! I shall not rest till my fate is decided.'

'Oh, I hope you will win!' said Lilla, laughing; 'I only wish it was my wager; I know what I should ask directly. But when will you settle it? Have you the lace with you?'

'Alas! no; it is miles away, at my old friend's parsonage.'

'Trust me, Mr. Randolph,' said Lady Delaunay, 'it

is safest there; you are throwing away the substance for the shadow; and meanwhile, allow me to ask if you do not require a little assistance for the poor people you have been telling us of, either for the mother or the child?'

'You are very good. Yes, we may be too thankful for your help, Lady Delaunay. Our difficulty just now is to find their friends, as her mother seems to have left her parish, and we have not yet been able to trace her.'

'Do you know the mother's name?'

'Dalton.'

'Indeed? There was, and doubtless still is, a respectable widow of that name at Apswell, in ——shire, where my son has some property, who settled there a few years ago, and whom I have frequently employed to distribute relief in my absence among the poor. The only objection to her was the almost morose gloom, that seemed inconsistent with an amount of piety I could not but believe to be sincere. I think I heard she had had a daughter, but I am not certain. There can be no harm in seeking her out, if you like to try.'

Randolph caught at the suggestion, and in searching for a card or letter on which to take down the address, pulled out, among others, one of the packets he had brought from Bryanstone Square. Lilla Brittan's eyes grew round at the sight. Till that moment she had almost forgotten her instructions. She watched his movements breathlessly, saw him write on the back of a letter, and then, as untaught by experience, he thrust the whole hastily back into his pocket, saw, with a beating heart, Mrs. Marsden's parcel slide down unnoticed, first on to the cushion, then on the

rug at his feet. At that moment he looked up, and was struck with the eager expression of her face.

'You seem more interested in my story, Miss Brittan, than you gave me reason to suppose you would be.'

'Yes, of course I am,' said she, colouring.

'May I ask what you were thinking of just then so earnestly?'

'Thinking? oh yes, I was—I was thinking what a hard-hearted crab of an old woman that must be, not to receive her own child when she came out of prison.'

'Hard words, my dear,' said Lady Delaunay, mildly.

'Well, but Lady Delaunay, don't you think so yourself?'

'It is hard to judge, Lilla, without hearing both sides. A keen sense of disgrace and of the value of character is one of those cheap defences of the respectable poor, of which I should be sorry to speak lightly. It would be a heavy blow to have a child return to an honest home out of a jail; some parents could not bear it. What honour is to us, is their good name to them, and a stain on it is worse than death. Of course, the nature of the offence and the circumstances attending it, ought to be taken into consideration. In this case it seems to have been the offender's best, perhaps her only chance of permanent amendment, and her mother's fireside was her natural shelter.'

'And probably would have been,' said Randolph; 'had not her first wrong step been to disobey her mother.'

'Ah, poor thing! Does she repent?'

'Bitterly; she would give the world, were it hers, to win her pardon.'

'Then never let her despair; for real repentance—

repentance for the fault, not regret at the penalty—repentance leading to humility, to change of conduct, to genuine submission and amendment—*nothing* is impossible'

'You think so, Lady Delaunay?'

'I *know* it. You think, perhaps,' she added, with a slight smile, that veiled no little emotion; 'that because I am inexorable to clamorous appeals against punishment, I cannot appreciate the renovating principle of contrition. I can allow for your mistake, and pardon it. Rely upon this—and in dealing with such cases, act accordingly—that it is not to true repentance and amendment that any mother would shut her heart and ear. To see the rock give forth water, the stiff neck bend to the yoke, the brow that was of brass stooping in the dust of generous shame;—for such a sight she would bear anything, do anything; yes, gladly die!'

'Is it then so rare?' asked Randolph, commanding himself with some difficulty.

'So rare, that when found, it is treason against the universe to conceal or discourage it. Tell the mother this, if she prove to be the individual I have named to you. If she be indeed a religious woman, and yet remain indifferent to the news of her lost child's penitence—news which should bring her to her side from the brink of the grave—then you must take up a high position, and warn her, that in withholding the hope of improvement from a spirit that God has broken, she makes herself responsible—not only for the evil that spirit yet may do—but for the loss of the good it might have done!'

'When I heard her speak thus,' said Randolph,

afterwards, in relating to his friend Emma what passed, 'I felt if I remained a minute longer in her company, I should infallibly betray myself. There was an instant when I half resolved to run the risk; but the next reminded me how little she was likely to be moved by a sudden impulse. I had seen pretty strong proof of that; my presumptuous interference, unauthorized, possibly unsupported by subsequent events, might only deepen the evil I sought to remedy; so perforce I held my tongue, and took my leave. So far, so good; I have gained more than one step in advance, and begin to see my way.'

CHAPTER XIII.

Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides.
SHAKESPEARE.

THE carriage stopped in Bryanstone Square to take up Miss Conway.

'Go in, my dear,' said Lady Delaunay, looking at her watch; 'and beg her to come directly. I am behind my time already.'

Miss Brittan hastened to obey, and met her friend on the stairs, just in time for a hurried whisper.

'Well, my dear, what news?'

'Oh, Miss Conway, such a scene at the Home! Poor Belle Unwin, who used to lend me books—I was so sorry for her, but I never could face Lady Delaunay again if she knew all—never! And yet she is so kind!'

'Never mind that now; where is Mr. Randolph?'

'Gone; what an odd, charming, quizzing man he is! I can't make out whether he is making fun of me or not, but there is not time now for half I have to say—I was to hurry you. Only look out when you are in the carriage, for he let something drop you want to see.'

'Papers?'

'Yes—a little parcel. I would have got them for you if I had had courage, but I was afraid.'

'You dear little thing! Anything else?'

'Yes—I know where he comes from; I saw his address.'

'Her ladyship is waiting for Miss Conway,' said the footman, appearing at the bottom of the stairs.

'Thank you, I am coming this moment. Good-bye, my dear Lilla,' shaking her by the hand, and whispering, 'What place was it?'

'Rectory—Cannymoor.'

'No!'

'Yes, indeed; near Shareham. Why?—who lives there?'

'Cannymoor?' repeated Miss Conway to herself, as she walked slowly to the carriage; 'Cannymoor—so soon after his return—as if *that* could be his object? And come to us direct from meeting *her;* what can it mean? —what is it he intends to do?'

There is a way of spending life, described with caustic power by the poet, as

> Dropping buckets into empty wells
> And growing old in drawing nothing up.

Miss Conway's case was not exactly this; and yet it resembled it. She was wise enough in her generation; chose good machinery, long ropes, windlasses in excellent repair, not a hoop or a stave out of its place, and best of all, good water and plenty of it. By this means she seldom brought up a bucket quite empty, but at the same time it never came full. Some tremor of the hand, some jerk of the cord, some unlucky jolt midway, always interposed between her wishes and completion; and what actually passed over the well's brink lost its zest from the recollection of what had been spilled on the way.

She had been dropping buckets all her life, and she was dropping them still; and the next was always to be that complete draught that would satisfy—but it had not landed yet.

From childhood she had been a schemer; had manœuvred for treats in the nursery and admiration in the drawing-room; finessed over lessons at home, and at school became a diplomatist in grain, who managed her teachers with one hand, and her companions with the other, and was in turns dreaded by them all. No one knew exactly *how*, but Charlotte Conway's influence and friendship always seemed to benefit herself at the expense of her friend: and pleasant and clever as she was acknowledged to be, many a worse temper and duller intellect made a more agreeable companion. Every now and then, some little thing would come out, some twisting of evidence, some inaccurate repetition, some shortness of memory, that could not be exactly convicted as false witness, and yet answered the same purpose; a story, told by her, generally bore quite a different meaning from its original one; and though, in the onset, she might be scrupulous in altering words as well as emphasis, the next step was too easy not to be taken, sooner or later.

Brought up with expensive tastes, as if certain to inherit a considerable fortune, she was early left unprovided for. The prospect of General Conway's noble succession had appeared to her father excuse enough for wasting the whole of his patrimony; and he had little to bequeath his daughter but brilliant expectations. Nothing could have had a stronger tendency to develop her ruling passion; and when, after her mother's death, she went to find a home

under the hospitable roof of her wealthy great-uncle, it was with the fixed determination of being his heiress. Into this well of promise her bucket dropped with all the skill she could command, and it soon ceased to be a question in her own mind whether success was *probable*—she had begun to consider it her *right*. Mrs. Marsden would be amply provided for with an annuity, and what more could she want? Besides, the general's life was as good as hers, any day. She had saved money herself, too, no doubt; it would not do to neglect any kind and considerate attentions that could make her declining years easier—oh no!

So,

> Round about her right hand,
> And round about her left,
> She wound the thread so fine.

And everybody said what a treasure she must be to them both.

All this is nothing new; it is what people are doing every day. Yes, but then it is rather awkward to be found out; and the very people who would do the same themselves, are sure to be the first to cry 'Shame!'

She had long been convinced—indeed, ever since the opening of his will—that her kind old protector had been set against her; a measure which, when practised upon herself, was not to be deprecated too severely. Circumstances now returned to her recollection as she retraced them, one by one, which might, which it seemed probable *must*, account for this, as well as for the grievous disappointment from which she had never recovered.

It is a well-known and a remarkable fact, that there

is hardly any one, however keenly alive to his own interest in every purpose and action, who does not, at some period, and in some degree or other, believe in the disinterested regard of somebody else. Even Miss Conway, as free from weaknesses of this sort as most people, had once been under the impression that she, who gave nothing for nothing, had a friend in one of her old schoolfellows, who loved her for herself alone. In this friend she confided, as she would have been too wary to do with any one else; and her finest webs of policy, as fast as they were spun, came under her cognizance, and were submitted for her approval. For years they kept up this unreserved correspondence, and her friend was assured, again and again, how much Miss Conway's brilliant prospects were ultimately to be for her advantage. At the time, these promises were sincerely made; Miss Conway really did anticipate the gratification of rewarding this flattering and disinterested attachment. But in the interim, the confidante began to feel with Harpagon, that it was necessary to '*toucher quelque chose*;' and sundry urgent applications for interest, introductions, and at last, for pecuniary assistance, gradually led to a coolness between the fair writers; soon, as is usual in such cases, growing into deep, though unacknowledged enmity. A few months before his death, some family stories, which he believed never to have transpired beyond it, came round again to the general's ears, garbled and distorted in their passage, and causing him no small annoyance. They were traced, with others of a similar character, to the disinterested friend; who, when pressed to give up her authority, scrupled not to name Miss Conway. The general indignantly applied

to his niece, who as indignantly refuted the charge; employing a great deal of skilful reasoning to convince him of her own entire innocence, and the utter worthlessness of the source whence the accusation proceeded. As he appeared convinced, the matter ended, with no further result than a complete rupture between herself and her former ally—then on the point of marriage with a gentleman in a diplomatic situation abroad.

Within the year, General Conway died, and it was found that he had made a new will only a short time before. His private papers being all taken possession of by Mrs. Marsden, his sole executrix, according to his express desire, no one could account for this sudden change of purpose; except by whispering, as friends would among themselves, that dear Charlotte's acuteness was sometimes apt to overshoot its mark, and that no one would have given old Mrs. Marsden credit for being half so clever.

Lady Delaunay, who, in common with her son and daughter, inherited a small portion of her uncle's property, never made any comment, or expressed any surprise. She had always been on friendly terms with her cousin, and maintained them; if she ever betrayed any symptoms of being hurt by the arrangements of the will, it was by her complete acquiescence therein. She would neither interfere, advise, nor assist in a single measure, without urgent solicitation; and redoubled her former kindnesses to Miss Conway, insisting on her house being her home. It was by tacit agreement a forbidden topic of discussion; but Miss Conway had the comfort of knowing her aunt thought her ill-used, and of at once commencing a new

tissue of the manœuvre and diplomacy, that had become an essential part of her existence. Unawares, alike to mother and son, from the time she became an intimate associate of both, a barrier to unrestrained confidence crept up between them; and the stronger grew her influence, the more frequently did she become the medium through which they held communication. The result of this was, that attached as he was to his mother, and regarding his cousin as an elder sister, Lord Delaunay was never happy at home, and always yielding to the propensities of his desultory nature to go anywhere for a new project, or an escape from business and mysteries. There seemed to be so many subjects he was not to allude to—so many things he was not to say, do, or deny, for fear of his mother's nerves or health—that he had got into the habit of saying as little to her as he could; while she, on the other hand, feeling, yet not owning to herself the estrangement, scrupulously refrained from any assumption of authority, or from the expression even of a wish, that might appear to encroach on his liberty. To know that he neglected his affairs, postponed his duties, and wasted the greater part of his income, was one of the trials she felt the more keenly, that every year was making her more sensible of the responsibilities of stewardship; but it had been skilfully insinuated that he was pained by an interference that left him, from respect for her wishes, no choice; and she preferred any disappointment to the risk of wearing out his affection.

Everything seemed to favour Miss Conway's designs. She was on the most deferential terms of tenderness with old Mrs. Marsden—her aunt's attachment was

warm and frank—her cousin had the highest opinion of her judgment and good intentions, and many a brilliant day-dream had she cherished of the manner in which they would, amongst them, repair the cruel injustice of her great-uncle. One object of dread alone loomed in the distance, and forbade her to rest; for in its train she recognised but too surely, detection, exposure, failure, and shame. To keep up the incessant watchfulness necessary to ward off this ever-impending evil, involved a strain of nerves and a wrestling with conscience, that made her life a torment: the rather that she had all the while to maintain a calm and smiling exterior.

This *bête noire* of her imagination was her banished cousin Adelaide; and when Lord Delaunay, in his disappointment and chagrin, confessed the step he had taken in defiance of her advice, and she found how very near the dreaded reconciliation had been—her dismay partook of the nature of that with which Napoleon heard of the conspiracy of Malet. And scarcely had she recovered from this alarm, when a new one opened suddenly before her, in a quarter where it was least expected. What could those papers be that had disturbed her uncle's dying thoughts?—and what had taken Maurice Randolph to Cannymoor?

She would have given the world to have been alone in the carriage for five minutes. It was maddening to know that the means of solving one, at least, of these problems, was literally at her feet, and yet not be able to make it her own. Several times she tried, but nowhere could she feel anything like a parcel of any kind; and the dread of attracting her aunt's notice at last made her abandon the attempt, trusting that her

maid, well trained and long practised in the diplomacies of secret service, would be more skilful, or more fortunate than herself.

The other question brought with it a train of thoughts still more exciting; reaching back across by-gone years, and waking up the old agony that had seemed then too much to bear. That scene described by Randolph to Henry and Emma, himself unconscious at the time of any suffering but his own, was present with her now as if it had just occurred; and the bitterness of soul with which she had learned that her worst fear was a reality, and her fondest hope a dream, had lost but little of its intensity by time and change. Still less had her thirst for revenge. What she felt from that hour for her fair and gifted rival—her superior in every advantage of personal attractions and social position—who seemed planted by fate in her path on purpose to obstruct and overshadow her course —was more than a mere womanly jealousy; it was a fixed, inexorable hate, that could bide its time, and veil its face in smiles; but never flinch, or deviate, or soften. And when to this are added the other secret reasons for implacability alluded to above, it may readily be imagined how fruitless were all poor Adelaide's appeals to her professed regard; appeals such as, under other circumstances, it would have been hard for a womanly nature to resist. And now the bare possibility, that he who had fled on that terrible day of discovery, stung with the sense of scorn and wrong, to seek forgetfulness in distance and peril, should have returned in milder mood, to forgive—to pity—perhaps to win—sent the hot blood rushing to her brain, till every nerve throbbed with anguish. If

the weight of that bold, vigorous intellect and energy were to be thrown in the scale in Adelaide's behalf, who could tell what might be the result? She sickened at the sight of the danger before her. She was forced to repeat to herself again and again, how unlikely it was—how altered they both were—how fickle were men in their first attachments—how little Adelaide was humbled by adversity; so that it was most probable, if they had met at all, it had been on hostile terms—before she could calm herself sufficiently to decide what had best be done. By this time they were at home; the carriage door was opened—she would have one moment, at least, for a hasty search, while her aunt alighted, and then—but Lady Delaunay was collecting some books and other articles lying about on the cushions, and in the pockets, and requested her to descend first. The instant she did so, she heard that some intimate friends, passing through town, were waiting in the house to see them; and was compelled to hurry in, with every appearance of eager joy. These visitors stayed so long, it was full two hours before she was able to communicate with her maid. That astute personage, who took a hint as readily as most people, did her best to make up for lost time, but to no purpose; the carriage was put away, the coachman gone home; no one had seen or heard anything particular; whatever parcels or books there were, had been no doubt collected by Mr. Anderson, the butler, as he handed his lady out, and carried up by him to her private sitting-room. As to asking questions of Mr. Anderson, one might as well go to my lady at once; so the baffled envoy returned to report progress, and await fresh orders, which her mistress knew not

how to give. She, in turn, waited to hear if any remark was made on the subject, and more than once brought the conversation round to it as nearly as she durst; but nothing transpired, and she was obliged at last, to conclude that her informant had been mistaken.

Was she equally so on the other question? That still remained a problem, which Miss Conway passed several hours in revolving in every point of view. The resolution she came to, after very serious meditation, was, that it could do no harm 'to drop Adelaide a line;' and a line was dropped accordingly, as none but herself could drop it. It began by telling her what she was sure her cousin would be glad to hear—that dear Delaunay was gone away from London smoke and British east winds, to enjoy the mild early spring of the Continent; and they need not expect him back till he was tired of sunshine, which would not be soon. Whereabouts he might be at any time, he never could say, so there was little or no trouble in corresponding with him.

'I suppose it can hardly be a surprise to you,' the letter proceeded, 'to hear we have had a visitor, in the shape of an old acquaintance with a new face, as well as a new name—Mr. Maurice Randolph, *ci-devant* Gray. I speak doubtfully, as it was only by accident I learned he had been lately in your immediate neighbourhood; he carefully avoided mentioning the circumstance, which, I must own, appears to me a little suspicious. There may be good reasons, no doubt, for all this mystery. Time and events may have altered your views of life, in which case I should be the last to think you to blame. He is now in the enjoyment of

a good fortune, and rather improved than otherwise by the lapse of years. You know I always thought you treated him ill, and I still retain the high opinion I had of his honour and generosity, so that I do not think you could have a kinder protector. Situated as you are, you will scarcely be justified in throwing away such an advantage for your little boy, even in the beaten way of friendship—supposing it to lead to nothing more. I will not be impertinently curious; but he was always very susceptible of pity, and pity, we know, is akin to that which we must not name. I feel I am making you angry; so, my dear, while you are wisely agreeing to forgive each other, be magnanimous, and forgive me too.'

Short and decided came the answer, as if to a cartel of defiance.

'I am at a loss to understand your meaning. There is no reason on earth why Mr. Randolph should make a mystery of our having met—first, as strangers, and since, as ordinary acquaintance. Were it not that I cannot believe you would jest with me in so heartless a manner, I should have great difficulty in receiving your remarks as serious. If they are so, understand this, at once, and for ever. My circumstances may have altered my opinion of individuals, from showing me human nature undisguised; but what you term my views of life, as far as they relate to what is due to myself and others, remain the same. I can pardon—I *have* pardoned, affront and injury—where I could not pardon myself, should I stoop to an obligation. I do not dispute his honour or his generosity; but I must be fallen indeed when I accept their protection. Your kind anxiety in our behalf has misled you; there

are means of providing for my boy's wants without sacrificing his dignity or mine.'

A smile played round Miss Conway's lips as she read these lines—every sentence bearing testimony to the indignant excitement in which they were written. 'It is a singular thing,' she thought, as she carefully folded up the letter, and put it aside, 'but no one would suppose how much cleverer Adelaide really is than I am.'

She was busy at her writing-desk a few hours later, when she was interrupted by the entrance of Lady Delaunay, her face full of perplexity and her hands full of letters.

'I want your assistance, my dear Charlotte, in some business matters here, which Delaunay has left all in confusion, and which I am at a loss how to arrange. Perhaps your memory can come to my aid. It relates to that farm at Oakside, which the general left him. There is a question mooted about the lease, and the tenant pleads a verbal promise of renewal, but has no witness or writing to show; and Delaunay's agent has had several advantageous offers, of which he argues his lordship ought to have the benefit. Now, as I have no right, whatever may be my inclination, to get the credit of liberality at my son's expense, without being sure that it is a case for anything but justice, that justice is what I want to ascertain. I thought you might, perhaps, recal something of the circumstance.'

'If I cannot,' said Miss Conway, after considering a moment, 'I think I know who can.'

'Who, my dear?'

'Mr. Randolph. He knew all my poor uncle's affairs: everything passed through his hands.'

'Indeed? I am glad I consulted you. Where is his card? I only hope he has not left town, as we have not seen him lately.'

'Oh no, he called in Bryanstone Square yesterday, and was afraid he should be detained in London some time longer: he had found so much business waiting for him to attend to. There was some joke, too, about a wager with you: I suppose that was only Lilla Brittan's nonsense.'

'You thought me incapable of such an indecorum?' said Lady Delaunay, smiling, as she took her niece's proffered seat and began her note. 'But we have a grand precedent—remember Maria Theresa's wager, and Metastasio's elegant compliment. There, I have invited your clever friend to dinner; and as I go by presently, I will persuade Mr. Powys to meet him, and make my peace in that quarter—for the twentieth time.'

Randolph accepted the invitation, which was, indeed, so worded, it would have been an affront to do otherwise. The party was small, but agreeable: Mr. Powys had recovered his good-humour—Lady Delaunay was all cordiality and kindness—there were two or three other guests, all sensible, well-bred, and pleasant, with the exception, perhaps, of one young man, a cousin of the Earl's, who might have been all three, if he had not considered his share of the hereditary beauty of the Chesters, sufficient exemption from the duties of society. He had, unhappily, imbibed the idea—on what logical principles it would be hard to say—that because a cavalry officer with a distinguished moustache,

it was incumbent on him to take five minutes to bring out as many words; keeping his eyes half shut the while, as if the honour of his regiment depended on the display of his long eyelashes.

He had observed Maurice some time with languid curiosity, before he took the trouble of remarking to his neighbour, Miss Conway, with his usual deliberation, 'Amazingly well informed, that friend of yours. He is the Wandering Jew, I think you said.'

'I think not,' said Miss Conway, laughing.

'No?—really? I made sure it was the Wandering Jew. My aunt knows everybody, and one has never seen him anywhere before. Where did you pick him up?'

'How you speak of our guests, Captain Chester! He is a man of good family, I can tell you, and better fortune than your own.'

'*That* he may easily be. I wish he would adopt me —he looks old enough to be my grandfather—I dare say he would. I will win his heart by pretending to take him for a military man. If he is the Wandering Jew, he will tell us the last news of the battle of Hastings.'

'Pray mind what you are doing,' remonstrated Miss Conway. 'He is not a man to put up with an affront, I assure you.'

'Affront him? He will be delighted. Nothing charms a man with a moustache like taking him for a lieutenant-colonel.' And availing himself of a pause in the conversation, Captain Chester leaned forward, to ask Randolph with a smile, if he had seen much active service?

Something in the smile, as well as in the tone, made Maurice's blood tingle, he knew not why. 'If you

mean military service, sir, I have never had the honour to serve at all.'

'Oh, indeed! I beg your pardon,' returned Captain Chester, with another marked smile, and he leaned back in his chair, as if satisfied.

'People have their own ideas on the subject of active service,' said Lady Delaunay, pleasantly. 'I do not know what Fitzroy's may be, representing as he does, the gallant ——th; but if Mr. Randolph's is to be considered passive, I should like to see his ideal of activity.'

Then by a few well-put questions, she gradually drew him into giving an account of an expedition in which he had been a sharer, in search of one of the buried cities of Central America, and which, owing to various unforeseen circumstances, proved one of no small peril and hardship. The interest of the company was excited; his brief, cursory sketch would not satisfy them; they pressed for details and particulars, and reluctant as he was to set himself up as a hero in that presence, enough transpired to raise him in everybody's opinion, as well as to excite their sympathy. Captain Chester alone sat sipping his wine, and smiling to himself occasionally: and when reproached by Miss Conway for being half asleep, protested he meant no offence to anybody.

'It was my mistake; I thought it was the Wandering Jew, and I find it is only Pizarro, or what's his name, who carries off the child, and gets peppered going over the practicable bridge O. P. It's all the same. Excuse me, Miss Conway, but nothing fatigues me like hearing where people have been. I never ask, and I never want to know. Delaunay and I met in a railway

carriage last year, and sat together all day; and we never told each other a word of what we had been doing, though we came, I believe, from different ends of the world. The only way to make travelling tolerable, is to make it a rule never to talk about it.'

'And if you are asked where you come from?'

'I say I don't know. Upon my life, it is as often the case as not.'

'That is not exactly Delaunay's: his weakness is, that he never knows where he is going.'

'And he is quite right. Nothing can be more tiring. I get into the first conveyance that happens to come in my way, and go to sleep: and when I wake up, I am sure to be somewhere. It is all the same. All places are pretty much alike. Where is Delaunay now?'

'He talked of being in Paris at Easter: meanwhile he is going through Normandy, I believe.'

'Well, perhaps I shall meet him. I am going abroad myself—I want change.'

'I think you do. *Any* change will be an improvement!'

'Do you know, you are quite severe; you are, upon my honour. I shall tell Delaunay you keep too clever company for me now. Your friend is the Continental Bradshaw, is he not?'

'You will soon find out what he is, if you do not take care.'

When the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room, Lady Delaunay found an opportunity of drawing Mr. Randolph aside, and with brief but sincere apologies, laying before him the matter she had on hand. To her great relief, he recollected the circumstance at once.

'I was present,' he said, 'when the promise of renewal was made, and I remember the general telling me, at the time, some of the reasons that made him give it. The tenant had sunk a considerable sum in improving the land, had worked hard all his life, and his father before him, without indulging in the expenses and luxuries adopted by many of his class; and in every respect had a claim on the liberality of his landlord. I am nearly sure there was a special mention of him in a codicil of his will.'

'Not of his *last* will,' said Lady Delaunay, shaking her head. 'His former one, whatever it might be, was destroyed a short time before his death.'

'So I have understood; and if it was remodelled in haste, he doubtless forgot this poor fellow altogether. But at any rate, I am positive of his *intention*, and I believe, among my old papers, I could find a memorandum of the very day. I was in the habit of keeping a diary, for the general's benefit, as well as my own.'

'You would do me a great favour, Mr. Randolph,' said Lady Delaunay, after a slight hesitation, 'if you could produce any evidence that could be laid before my son. He is rather prejudiced against this tenant, as being old-fashioned, and averse to modern improvements (though by your account diligent in making the most of the land), and his agent has endeavoured to dissuade him from the renewal; but to be assured of the general's promise, and of the good reasons for giving it, would, I am confident, settle the matter. I am unwilling to interfere personally; besides, we unfortunate women of business, in our dread of responsibility, are apt to go on puzzling our brains over ima-

ginary difficulties, where a man's clear sense would arrange it all in five minutes. To come to the point—if you could only explain the case yourself to Lord Delaunay, you would be doing us a real kindness.'

Randolph expressed his readiness with a warmth that gratified her. 'You see, my dear sir,' she said, with a smile that made his heart throb, from its likeness to her daughter's, 'the more I inquire, the more evidence I find of the warm esteem and confidence with which my dear uncle regarded you; and whether I will or not, I must treat you as an old family friend, instead of an acquaintance of a few days.'

He took her offered hand with the deepest respect. 'If you wish me to feel sure, dear madam, that this is more than a gratifying compliment, you will allow me to be actively employed in your service. If it will relieve you from anxiety, I will go after Lord Delaunay as soon as you please, and explain the matter. I am so accustomed to be on the move, a hundred miles more or less is nothing. Where is he to be found?'

'That I cannot exactly tell you, but I take your friendly offer as it is meant; and if, as I have reason to fear, my son continues to postpone his return'—she sighed unawares as she spoke, 'I may be too glad to avail myself of it. I will wait till I know something decided about his movements, and let you know. You see I take you at your word.'

'You honour me by selecting me to do you service. I will do my best to merit your confidence. Of that which the general reposed in me, I have lately received a most unexpected proof through Mrs. Marsden.'

'Indeed?' said Lady Delaunay, with a slight change of countenance.

'Yes; it appears that General Conway, on his death-bed, expressed a wish that certain papers should be examined by me. Mrs. Marsden, not knowing where I was, adhered to the letter of her instructions, kept them by her, unopened, and, I imagine, forgot them—till my call reminded her of their existence and she put them into my hands. I have not examined them yet, and as they seem to be principally private letters, I wish to know if I have authority to do so; whether there may not have been some misapprehension of his meaning, and whether it would not be more satisfactory if they were opened in your presence?'

'By no means, Mr. Randolph,' interrupted Lady Delaunay, gently, but decidedly, a slight flush playing on her cheek for a moment. 'That there *has* been misunderstanding somewhere, I do not pretend to ignore; but I have no doubt of the clearness of my uncle's mind at the last, and his wishes are sacred to us all. If he named you for that service, it was with some good reason; and you will be serving us all, if you simply comply with his last request. When you have done so, Mrs. Marsden will act as she thinks proper. She has her own conception of the duties of an executrix,' she added, with her previous sweet smile, as if to remove any impression of hauteur, 'and this is a specimen; but as you say, they were no doubt forgotten.'

He bowed in silence; and the claims of her other guests compelled her to close the conversation. Miss Conway, who had been watching them from a distance, was considering how to win the now disengaged visitor over to her side of the room, when she observed Captain Chester go leisurely up to him, with the manifest purpose

of becoming better acquainted. Prescient of danger, she at once began to manœuvre in that direction; but detained by passing obstacles, lost the opening of the conversation, and with it, the fund of useful information the hussar was imparting from the low easy-chair into which he had dropped—as to *who* was the only boot-maker in London that it was possible for a gentleman to employ.

'I see you have had a long discussion with my aunt, Mr. Randolph,' said Miss Conway, ruthlessly snapping the thread of his eloquence. 'Can you assist her?'

'I trust so; I am no lawyer, but I think I can make this clear.'

'I might have been sure of that; there never *was* anything you could not do if you chose.'

'No, really, is that the case?' said Captain Chester. 'Quite an Admirable what's-his-name. How charming! I wish I was. I can never do anything I choose, by any chance. But if my aunt has business to do, why doesn't she go to law? Were you ever fortunate enough to go to law, Mr. Randolph?'

Randolph had not had that distinction, and was not particularly anxious for it.

'Then, pardon me, but you never made a greater mistake. It is the finest thing in the world—quite worth the risk, and expense, and all that, for the sake of the fund of entertainment. Upon my honour, I think it saved my life last year. I was just dying by inches of sheer dulness—sick of everything—bored into a low fever—and some rogue was good enough to cheat me out of a lot of money, and we had to fight it out in the courts. Upon my word, it was better than a play—plays are the greatest bores under the sun; and this

had all the fun of a match, going on for months. It was new life to me; I advise you to try it.'

'Thank you; it is worth knowing. Did you recover your money?'

'I really forget. Yes—I suppose I got some. The betting was heavy against me, as the other side had a big-wig of a lawyer; but I would back mine against the whole field; and I only wish somebody would bring an action against me to-morrow—upon my life, I do. If ever you want a lawyer, pray don't forget to secure mine—the coolest hand—the most wide-awake dog—what *is* he called? I have the most wretched memory in the world—where is it, Miss Conway, that what's-his-name is always "rolling rapidly"?'

'Do you mean, "On Linden, when the sun was low—"?'

'Lyndon! thank you! that's the man; Henry Lyndon! Why, what's the matter? Is he not to be mentioned? Oh, ah, I forgot; he is a sort of connexion of ours, isn't he? I never thought of that; upon my life, I'll try and plead nearness of kin with him, and get him to consider it in his bill. He is a monstrous clever fellow. Pray mention my name to him, Mr. Randolph, and I will answer for his showing you every attention.'

'Thank you; the next time I see my friend Mr. Lyndon, I will mention your name with pleasure.'

Miss Conway started and turned pale. The captain opened his handsome eyes for a momentary stare of wonder, then subsided again with his favourite phrase. 'It is all the same, he is an amazingly clever fellow. I must get my aunt to ask him here, Miss Conway. No? won't that *do?* By the bye, what is become of

our fair cousin? She may be dead and buried for all one hears of her. I have half a mind to hunt her up.'

Nobody answered, but Mr. Randolph's white teeth flashed for a moment through his moustache, and his fingers clenched, whether he would or not. He caught Miss Conway's eye, watching him with a painful eagerness, in which there was something sinister he had never seen before. He returned the look with one before which she quailed, her heart beating fast with undefined fear. She turned to find safety in increased numbers, and Mr. Powys being nearest at hand, was easily drawn into the group. A discussion had been going on between him and one of the gentlemen, respecting some copies of inscriptions lying on the table; and Miss Conway gladly saw Mr. Randolph become interested in it, and took a part herself, with considerable spirit. From inscriptions ancient, they came down to handwriting modern, and the characteristics of different periods and people. Miss Conway fetched a volume of autographs, in illustration of the subject; and Mr. Powys told some wonderful stories of a friend of his who possessed the much-disputed art of reading character from handwriting. The audience testifying much incredulity, he tried to exhibit a little of the science himself, and failed signally; then the others must needs try their skill. Miss Conway was urgent upon Randolph to make the attempt, to justify her report of his universal powers; and opening a letter-case, produced a handful of what she called dead letters—formal notes of invitation, inquiry, and other civilities, which she begged him to examine deliberately, and write his verdict on each. There

had arisen a request for music, and she was obliged to leave him to his task, while attending one of her visitors to the piano.

Little did the gentle lady by whose side she stood, to all appearance entranced by her delicate rendering of one of Mozart's loveliest melodies, imagine the fierce rate at which her pulse was beating, in the struggle to keep herself from looking back. The deep-drawn sigh of suppressed agitation seemed but the natural effect of sweet music sweetly played, and was accepted as the most agreeable compliment a performer can receive. When the piece was finished, Miss Conway was called on in turn, and with unflinching resolution complied; played and sang whatever was asked for; and not till her duty had been thoroughly accomplished,did she give a single glance at the other end of the room.

There was that in his attitude that made her go to him at once. With a hurried air, though as if laughing at her own nervousness, she begged permission to look over the letters she had given him, as it had just occurred to her they might have got mixed with some others. He suffered her to do as she pleased, only dropped his left hand from the table to his knee, where it remained clenched, as if he were suppressing the expression of pain. She was soon satisfied, and apologized for the interruption, complimenting him on his studious and abstracted air.

'It is quite refreshing to see any one take up a new pursuit so heartily. Have you discovered any startling revelations of character yet?'

'No,' said he, quietly, 'only a confirmation of what I had surmised before.'

She looked at him keenly, read the fierce passion working beneath the composed exterior, and glided away, satisfied for the present. A minute afterwards, Randolph, hearing a gentle yawn behind him, looked round, and saw Captain Chester leaning on the back of his chair. He nodded as he met Maurice's somewhat angry glance, observing that it was the neatest thing he had seen for an age.

'What do you mean, sir?' asked Maurice, sharply enough.

'No, don't pretend to be modest; it does you infinite credit. I should not have detected it myself, only I happen to know the trick, for it cost me a guinea. Should you object to show me your left hand for a minute?'

Randolph did so, very coolly. It was empty. Captain Chester's face actually expanded with admiration. 'Now, how *did* you manage that? Upon my honour, that was good! I bet you ten to one, you don't do it again!'

'Perhaps not,' said Randolph, drily, 'though I am afraid you must take another lesson or two before you become a conjuror. But there is one thing I shall be happy to teach you on more moderate terms, as it is essential for you to know.'

'What may that be, pray, sir?'

'That I leave to your own sagacity to find out,' said Randolph, and he walked away. Before Captain Chester had recovered his presence of mind, he was half way down the street, arm-in-arm with Mr. Powys.

The gallant hussar, who had meant to tease, but not to quarrel (it being one of his lazy delights to irritate

anybody whose blood was hotter than his own, but not to commit the solecism of a squabble in a drawing-room), felt a little perplexed by this method of treatment. He had been longing all the evening to put the stranger into a passion; but he had an unpleasant feeling that somehow he had contrived to get the best of it. 'Hang the fellow!' he thought to himself, at last; 'I almost believe he meant to be rude. Upon my honour, I won't stand it, if he did, and I'll tell him so.'

But happily it was too late, for that time at any rate.

'I have thought a good deal,' said Mr. Powys, as they walked along, 'of what you represented to me that day I had the pleasure of being introduced to you at the Home. I am ready to confess it was a rebuke I deserved. No, do not apologize, or explain; it was a friendly act. The fact is, we are very apt to let our educated people go their own way, and hesitate to interfere, where, in the case of a poorer one, we should volunteer advice and admonition. The rules of society may have something to do with it, but so it is. I had no idea at the time how intimately you knew the family, or at least some members of it. I myself have only been on these sociable terms within the last few years; at the time that unhappy breach took place, I had not been very long in the parish, and our acquaintance was confined to official and ceremonious civility. I have been inquiring since I saw you of those who knew the circumstances of the case, and by all accounts it appears that this poor young lady has been very easily given up by her friends. Without palliating either the sin of filial disobedience, or the imprudence

(to say the least of it) of a clandestine marriage, still as there was nothing disgraceful or derogatory in the connexion with a brave young officer, who died in his country's service, it does seem severe treatment to cut her off as they have done. At the same time, anything like an authorized interference would do more harm than good—don't you see? If I went to my kind friend and parishioner, and said, "My dear good lady, you are very wrong, and it is my duty to tell you so—" the answer I should get would be a very gracious acknowledgment of my excellent intentions, and a remark that I had done my duty, and I must not blame her for doing hers.'

He had talked himself quite into a heat, and stopped here to take his hat off, and dash his hand briskly through his crisp grey hair. Randolph remained silent, waiting for what should come next.

'Well, sir,' continued Mr. Powys, putting on his hat again, and resuming his active stride, that was fully a match for that of his athletic companion, 'what I was going to say, was this—I am ready and willing to do my part—any part, that will become my office, and not make mischief; but if you, as an old friend of the family, are really setting yourself to put matters to rights, I would advise you to begin by securing the Earl. He is the proper person, and as kind-hearted a man as breathes; only, between ourselves, you must deal with him face to face. Letters he as often leaves unopened as not, or if he opens, does not heed them, and the last reasoner carries the most weight. He has great influence over his mother, or would have, if he chose to exert it. She is passionately attached to him, and one of the great objects of her life seems to be

to supply his deficiencies, without infringing on his dignity. Were Lord Delaunay to walk into his mother's room with his sister on his arm, and say he had brought her home, I have not the slightest doubt that her mother would bid her welcome. I only wonder he did not do it long ago.'

'Let me do him justice in one instance, at any rate,' cried Randolph, 'especially as it may account to you for my personal interest in the matter.' And in as few words as possible he explained the whole story of the abstracted letter. His companion listened with much interest, and refrained, with difficulty, from reproaching him with carelessness. The point that seemed to strike him most, was the evident, though guarded hostility of Miss Conway. They talked the whole case over, and agreed that the safest plan would be for Randolph to avail himself of Lady Delaunay's business as an introduction, and so obtain an opportunity of explaining the accident to the Earl; this would enable him to judge how he felt disposed towards his sister.

'It craves wary walking,' said Mr. Powys; 'for they are a high-spirited race, more accustomed to give than to receive; and in the very attempt to do disinterested service, one may give mortal offence when one least expects it.'

'I am disposed to take my chance of that,' said Randolph.

'Well, that is right, and they will be grateful to you in the end, no doubt, if you succeed. I do not want to damp your chivalrous zeal, but you must be prepared for a few difficulties. Meanwhile,' added Mr. Powys, as he stopped to shake hands and part, 'you have this old-fashioned, often-tested recompence to en-

courage perseverance—"*Blessed are the peacemakers.*" Good night.'

The words were kindly meant and sincerely spoken, but in Randolph's frame of mind they sounded but a bitter irony; and could the warm-hearted clergyman have seen the curl of his quivering lip as he turned away, he would have doubted the blessedness of any peace made with so wild a war within.

CHAPTER XIV.

Une femme douce et sage
A toujours tant d'avantage!
Elle a pour elle en partage
L'agrément, et la raison.
MARMONTEL.

SO many days had passed without a visit from their new friend, the Lyndons had begun to think he must have left town unexpectedly, and to form not a few ingenious conjectures as to the cause. However, they were all wasted, for he walked in one evening, when Emma was sitting alone; looking, she thought, so worn and depressed, her kindly sympathies were on the alert at once, though she knew better than to notice it.

'You will have some time to wait, if you have anything to say to my husband,' she said, observing Randolph look round, as if expecting him to appear. 'It is his lecture night, and he will not be home before nine.'

'If I may stay till then, I will gladly. I was not aware Mr. Lyndon had a lectureship. I have no doubt he is well worth listening to.'

'Well, I have been told so by those who ought to know; and it is rather tantalizing, that it should only be on subjects that I cannot understand. But we shall

not wait tea for him; he never drinks it at night, unless he is going to sit up and work, which I never allow after the lecture.'

The refreshing draught, the cheerful little room, the pleasant open face, each after its own fashion, revived the wearied spirits of the visitor; still, through all his exertions to be agreeable, Emma could perceive there was something on his mind that he was longing to talk about, and hesitated to introduce. By way of giving him an opening, she inquired if he had been very busy.

'Yes,' said he, coolly, 'pretty well. As if it were not enough to have half-a-dozen other people's affairs to look into, I have been obliged to pay some attention to my own. There is not a more inconvenient blessing on earth than a thorough-going friend who happens to be a keen man of business; who does not care how he worries you so he secures your interests, and would rather risk your life than your money. Then, to vary the monotony of taking care of myself, I have had the comfort of losing some more letters belonging to other people.'

'Again?' said Emma, unable to help laughing; 'you are certainly most unlucky. I hope you found them before they had caused the mischief of the last.'

'The mischief remains to be seen; I have hopes of their recovery, from advertisements and promises of reward; but it has been a great source of vexation and worry.'

'Were they of importance?'

'I fear, as much as I hope, they are of very great importance. They form part of a collection left by General Conway to be examined by me. Unwelcome

as the task has been, it was laid upon me in a manner that prevented refusal; and I soon found it involved so much justice to others, that I had no choice but to go on. I long to tell you much that I must at present keep back; what I have already discovered only makes me the more anxious for the rest. As soon as I know the whole, I shall endeavour to persuade the lady from whom I received them, to allow me to put them into your husband's hands.'

'Indeed?' said Emma, looking up eagerly, 'then they relate to—'

'Yes; so far I may acknowledge. They *do* relate to that matter we wot of; very little interest would they have for me did they not. And, Mrs. Lyndon, I may add further, that if, as I am inclined to believe, they give me opportunity of conferring on that haughty spirit such a boon as she hardly dares hope for, I shall have won a victory, consummated a revenge, such as rarely falls to the lot of man.'

'Indeed you will,' said Emma, warmly; 'how touched, how grateful she will be! I envy your generous heart such a triumph!'

'You do? Would you like to see how it casts its shadow before? The foretaste is often the sweetest part.'

He handed her a crumpled note; she read it with surprise and interest, her countenance changing visibly.

'Well?' said Randolph, as she looked up, and fixed her eyes on his, 'is that plain enough, Mrs. Lyndon?'

'One thing in it is very plain,' said Emma; 'it was not meant for you to read, and ought not to have been shown to you.'

'That would not surprise you, if you knew the individual to whom it is addressed. It was ingeniously done—slipped, as by mistake, among waste papers, and given to me to test my skill in reading characters by handwriting. I saw the manœuvre, without guessing its meaning, till I found the letter; and then I had to use a little sleight of hand to carry it off. As a study of character it is a volume in itself.'

The bitter tone in which he spoke, dismayed Emma, and she hesitated how to reply. He had, indeed, brooded over every line, every word of Lady Adelaide's letter, torturing himself with fancied meaning of personal scorn and defiance, that had destroyed his rest by night, and preyed on his spirits by day; while the discoveries breaking upon him through General Conway's papers served but to feed his feverish excitement.

'Yes,' he said, following Emma's eyes, which had again turned wistfully to the letter, sympathizing more warmly with the writer than she liked to show, 'it has taught me one thing at least, that I only surmised before. It has shown me to a certainty *how* she is to be humbled. The more she scorns and hates me, the more galling will it be to accept my services: and to reject them will be beyond her power. It is in my hands to do or leave undone; nothing she can write, or say, or look, can hinder me from doing as I have been doing the last few days, and mean to do till I succeed—and have won back for her, if it is to be won, the station she has lost. I vowed it when I saw her last; when I really believed—oh, how blindly!—that her nature was changed by her sorrows, and that she was the angel in heart that she is in form. I had her

dear hand in mine—at my lips, for the first time in my life—and something beguiled me to hope—for the last!—'

He covered his face with his hands. Emma, full of pity directly she saw him softened, expressed an opinion that he might yet be mistaken.

'No,' said he, bitterly, though his eyes were moist with the anguish of which he was ashamed, 'my mistake was *then*, in fancying physical weakness was moral regeneration. I know my course now, and shall follow it: and woe, tenfold woe to that proud, self-relying heart, when she looks round on her recovered prosperity, and owes it all to me!'

'Well, I don't know,' said Emma; 'I think I could put up with that, if I regained my mother; and I am very sure, if you succeeded in making her happy in one way, you would not undo it all again in another. People never feel so kindly as towards those they have served.'

'Let me feel what I may, it will not alter the fact, or sweeten the wormwood of the obligation. But you may be sure also, if that day ever comes, I shall not stay to be a witness of her mortification. Let me but carry out my end, and then England has nothing more to offer me, and will hear of me no more. Thank goodness, I have no family ties, no duties, to chain me to one spot or climate.'

'No duties?' repeated Emma.

'No: what duties has a man with no near relations —no home, no work; whom no one will miss when he is gone, or cares particularly about while he stays? a man who has been the slave of a fatal and hopeless passion, till he is past the age for

happiness, or usefulness, or content? Such a man can but do as he has hitherto done—roll on his proverbially mossless course—till he rolls down-hill.'

'But,' said Emma, to whose steady notions all this sounded very unsatisfactory doctrine, 'will not the duties follow him, roll he as fast as he may?'

'No,' said he, carelessly; 'I know of none that need concern a traveller, beyond taking care of portmanteau, passport, and purse. At least, these are generally enough for most men; and too much for some.'

'I have always been taught,' said Emma, 'that where God places us, we have our work to do; and I do believe we are never happy, or easy in our minds, when we leave it undone. Is not this true?'

'True? Doubtless, if you say so. The question is, what is the work?'

'I do not think there is much difficulty in finding it, is there? Where there is so much sin and so much sorrow, surely everybody may find some one to make better or happier.'

He was silent for some time, and she quietly took up her work. Presently, with a sigh, almost like a groan, he murmured, 'To make others better or happier, we ought to know how to do it for ourselves; and *that* knowledge, if I ever had, I have long since lost.'

Emma looked up with surprise and concern.

'Ay,' he went on, 'it is not with us as with you, whose better thoughts and holier aspirations are cherished and protected like your green-house plants; *ours* are left to grow wild in the hedges, for weeds to choke and birds to peck at, and rough hands to pull up and tear down. It is a privilege of our constitu-

tional freedom, no doubt, that no one can make us religious against our will; but little as you may suppose it, there are times when all that education and knowledge of the world can do for us, would be given, and gladly, for that peace and quietness in religion which we see in a woman's face.'

'Yes,' said Emma, honestly; 'I can quite imagine that. I do not know what people do without it; only there is often a great deal of religion struggling in their hearts, that their neighbours cannot see, and have no idea of.'

'You, a religious woman, think so?'

'I never said I was more of a religious woman than anybody else. I only wish to do right, and constantly find myself doing just the reverse.'

'And the sense of that makes you hopeful about others?'

'Yes, in many cases.'

'Well, when I have asserted that principle myself before some religious people, I have been told I knew nothing of the matter.'

'They might not be far wrong,' said Emma, smiling; 'I must own your ideas seem to me somewhat vague. But do not you believe that there is good, even in the worst; and that to reach that is our best chance of getting rid of the evil?'

'Certainly; and it does me good to hear you say so. But how do you account for it?'

'How?' she repeated, surprised for a moment; then blushing at her own earnestness, she added, in a lower and reverent voice, 'is it not evidence of *His* presence striving in us, from whom *all* good things come? That very longing you speak of, is it not the working of an

inner life, craving for its natural support and native air?'

He bent his head in silence, as if pondering over her words.

'And after all,' said Emma, growing bolder as she went on, and somewhat encouraged by the expression of his face; 'you talk of the hedge-row shrub as compared with the garden flower. Is that a fair simile? I think religion in a man is much more like a forest tree, to whose very existence these buffetings of wind and rain are necessary, which would kill a tenderer plant.'

'Very stunted specimens are many among us, then.'

'Very. But then, as my father says, trees that will have green-house shelter, must be content to live in Chinese flower-pots.'

'If, then,' said Randolph, 'a man is to be the better for being knocked about in life, disappointed in himself and others, till he lose all confidence in anybody and anything—what ought all this and more to have done for me?'

'Well, it might at any rate have taught you humility in judging yourself, and charity in judging others.'

'Humility?' repeated he, colouring; 'I really begin to think you fancy I am proud.'

'Did that never occur to you before?'

'Proud? I have no pride in me. Every man has his feelings—his sense of what is due to him—to his honour—to his character. What makes you think me proud?'

'I beg your pardon,' said Emma, 'I may have wronged you. I was going to wrong you still more, perhaps, in doubting your charity.'

'Nay, there you do. Vagabond over the earth as I have been, thank Heaven, I have never yet seen want without giving it a helping hand, and never could. There is no merit in it; it is simply constitutional.'

'You have no pride and no uncharitableness. Indeed I wish you joy. You are free from two of the greatest miseries in the world. I may as well, then, put this letter into the fire.'

'What are you doing?' cried he, starting forwards; 'I would not part with it for a kingdom.'

'Ah!' said Emma, with a gentle smile, as she yielded it to his impatient grasp, 'I wonder which is most mistaken, you or I.'

He flushed violently; the veins of his temples stood out like cords. There was a short pause; then he pressed the paper to his lips, crushed it again in his hand, and flung it into the grate.

When he turned to look at Emma, he saw her eyes full of tears.

At that instant Henry came in. His quick glance, as he greeted his visitor, turned from him to his wife, with the eager inquiry, 'Anything new?'

'No, Harry,' said Emma, smiling through her emotion, 'it is nothing new to see a brave man win a battle.'

'Ay?' said he; 'is it so? I am glad of it, for we want a little encouragement just now. I have a great deal to say to you, Mr. Randolph; and, by the bye, Emma, my love—how soon could you be ready to go down to Cannymoor?'

CHAPTER XV.

A horse, a horse! my kingdom for a horse!
SHAKESPEARE.

IF the first appearance of Mr. Randolph caused a sensation in Cannymoor, it may readily be imagined what was produced by his sudden departure. No preparation, no warning, no visits of polite farewell; here to-day and gone to-morrow, as one may say; and coming back, nobody knew when, not even Dr. Home—who, when besieged with inquiries, only remarked, the lad would please himself, and live the longer. And had he really just bought a horse and a pony, and hired a gipsy to look after them, keeping him at the inn till his return? How delightfully eccentric!

Yes, Dr. Home admitted, it was eccentric enough, if that were all; and master and man seemed well matched; but the cattle must be exercised since they were there, and willing and clever as Colly was, she would cut no great figure in the circus, so it was as well. At any rate, the tamer of horses was in the way of hearing what was good, if he chose to profit by it; and so long as he kept sober and quiet, it was no affair of anybody's what his antecedents might be.

In real truth, it had been against his judgment that

Randolph had made a temporary groom of Abner; the old gentleman arguing that to leave a man of that stamp hanging about a village inn, with nothing to do, was putting him into temptation instead of taking him out. However, Maurice, as usual, went his own way to work, and Abner was ordered to fit himself out, and solemnly engaged on satisfactory terms as attendant on himself and his stud—with a few private bye-laws, adapted to his peculiar genius, and a peremptory injunction to make himself useful at the rectory. At the rectory accordingly, he spent great part of his time, and gratitude for the services he rendered Colly, and the fatigue he saved her, made her master and herself more than usually zealous for his moral and religious improvement. He was willing enough to be improved, as it appeared; learnt the Catechism in obedience to his reverence's order, and sat patiently attentive to the chapter, which Colly, with her best spectacles on, made a point of reading out, very slow and very loud, every evening before they parted; but when the two kind missionaries came to compare notes of their progress, it must be owned they had not a great deal to show. Perhaps they were a little too impatient, as the wisest missionaries are apt to be; but at any rate delayed success did not diminish their good-will; nor did it appear to them the satisfactory argument it seems, in the present day, to be considered—for ceasing to try.

One thing was, however, palpable to everybody's understanding, and that was the new parishioner's devotion to his four-footed charge; and Mr. Randolph's groom and horse and Mr. Randolph's pony were the favourite objects of attraction in their master's absence, especially in the eyes of one individual, who

thought the beauty of the animals only to be equalled by the rare felicity of the rider.

Boys may live, grow, and thrive, without crossing a pony's back, as Caspar Hauser did without looking over his own shoulder, and never know or care for what they have missed; but once come to the knowledge of that great want, it soon becomes a hunger that craves to be satisfied. From the day when Walter had cantered round the churchyard, life on foot had become a burden to him, and he to everybody else. Ride he must, and ride he would; every gentleman did. His papa had horses in India, and why didn't grandpapa, since he was a squire, live like other people, and as the Squire Lyndons used to do before him? Or, at any rate—and this was the burden of the whole—when would his mamma give him a pony of his own? She tried to put the idea out of his head, by devoting herself more than ever to his amusement, but in vain. His dreams at night, like his yearnings by day, were all on the unattainable happiness; and instead of soldiers, his slate was now regularly filled with marvellous quadrupeds, all mane and tail, with ecstatic riders perched upon them, nowhere particular, adhering by some mysterious law of gravitation, not comprehensible to ordinary minds. But one day he came in from a walk, his face beaming with rapture. He had met Abner, and the horse and pony, and talked to him about longing to ride, and Abner was such a good-natured fellow, he put him on directly, and they had been cantering ever so far, and so fast! and Abner said his master's orders were, if ever Master Lyndon wished to use the pony, it was to be at his service. Was it not kind? and now he could ride every day, for Abner said

the pony had not half enough work, and was eating his own little head off, as fast as he did his hay.

Much to Walter's consternation, his mother looked very serious indeed; and though she did not blame him for doing what he had been allowed to do once before, she forbade his ever repeating the indulgence. She could not give him her reasons; but he must be content this time to believe she knew best, and would not refuse him if it was right. It was a bitter disappointment; and long did he argue the point, much longer than she had ever known him do before. Penelope's words came back to her memory, as hasty words, hardly heeded at the time, so often do, 'Stay till you thwart his inclinations, and *then* see if he will obey!' And with the remembrance, her face grew so stern and sad, the boy could only fling his arms round her neck, and promise not to ask her any more.

But the next day was bright and fine, for those who did not mind a March wind: and as Walter plodded through his lessons, the image of the pony was perpetually before his eyes. That morning, multiplication was vexation indeed, copies were a nuisance, his favourite chapters of history dull and uninteresting—who cared whether the Gauls got into the Capitol or not? They were all geese together, as far as he could see: and as to Bruce at Bannockburn, a fellow who would throw great spikes about to lame horses, deserved to lose the battle, and he wished he had! Nothing went right, and his mother's patience was sorely tried. To put him into better humour, she went out to walk sooner than usual; and promised, after calling to see her sick pensioner, to take their long-talked of expedition to the quarry, and hunt for geological specimens.

This, though science in general was pronounced stupid stuff, was ungraciously admitted to be some consolation; and once out in the air, his spirits began to revive, and his tongue to rattle as usual.

The old sergeant was sitting on a bench outside his door, so intent on some employment over which he was stooping, that they called several times to him through the garden gate before he looked up. Directly he saw who were standing there, he rose to admit them, and made his customary salute, though more sullenly than was his wont in the presence of my Lady. The fact was, he was rather ashamed of the occupation in which he had been detected, and glanced half-fiercely at Lady Adelaide's face, as if prepared to resent any remark that might be made. She was, indeed, a little surprised to see he was cutting out with his clasp-knife a tiny chest of drawers, such as dolls and dolls' mothers delight in; but when, as she entered, she recognised, shyly hiding behind him, his sick lodger's child, she understood at once, and her heart thrilled with pleasure. The old man tried to seem indifferent, but he could not resist her smile. He muttered something under his beard about anything being better than doing nothing; and the brat having no one to see after it, and one must somehow stop its squalling—but Lady Adelaide appeared not to hear this; she looked full into his rugged face, more kindly than she had ever done yet, and for the first time offered him her hand. The colour rose slowly into his cheeks as he took it, and put it to his rough lips.

'Yes, my lady, you see how it is. A precious fool I make of myself, at this fiddling work; but this here babby, not a soul out of doors will look at her, or play

with her; but call her the little tramp, and the gipsy, and the unbaptized heathen, and I don't know what; so, thinks I, if that's her sort, she's like to belong to me, and if your good people won't be kind to her, I must. If she turns out bad, it is just their faults for leaving her to such a hardened old sinner.'

The sneer that accompanied these words gave a peculiarly savage expression to his features, as he resumed his employment. Lady Adelaide stood considering him for a few moments in silence.

'Sergeant Wade,' she said, presently, 'because we are sinners, does it follow that we must be hardened too?'

He looked up, and eyed her intently now, in his turn.

'*We*, my lady? I didn't know *you* were one. I don't go by the spiteful things fools choose to say.'

'Nor I,' said, she gently; 'my own conscience tells me quite enough.'

'Ay, ay,' said the old man, with a sarcastic smile, 'I know what that means. Many's the time I've heard folks call themselves sinners, and look dismal enough about it; but it's only *litany* sinners that they mean, after all. I never yet found *one* who would own to a single wrong thing he had done in his life!'

'Listen, sergeant,' said Lady Adelaide, with an emotion in her voice that gave it additional earnestness: 'this much I can, and will own to you, sooner than you should doubt us all. I am at this very moment suffering the consequences of having done wrong—not once, nor twice. How long I may have to bear them, God only knows, who gave us His law, and takes care to make it honourable; but it would be a heavy addition

to my sorrow, if I felt my heart grow hardened, so that I could not repent.'

He seemed touched in spite of himself.

'Since your ladyship says it, it is not for me to contradict you, but I'd believe no one else; and I don't believe now that you've ever done aught to make *them,*' with a jerk of his thumb at the public generally, 'speak against you as they does.'

'Perhaps not,' she said; 'but I am afraid I have done quite as little to make them speak in my favour. You and I have not made ourselves beloved by our neighbours, sergeant. We have thought so much of ourselves—no matter whether because we felt we were better or worse than others—that we have had no room in our hearts for them, and they have shut theirs against us. I have resolved this shall not be the case any longer with *me;* will *you* try the same?'

His shaggy head drooped on his breast despondingly, almost like despair.

'I am a plain man, my lady, and I speak my mind. You have done me great honour by putting yourself in the same boat with me, as it were; but it don't stand to reason as it should be true. Supposing they do go to call you proud, and high, and such like, which is what *I* never found you, nor anything but what a lady ought to be, my lady—and many thanks to you for all the respect you have showed me and my house many a time—how does *that* make you out to be such a one as I? Do you know what I am? Do you know what I have seen, and done, and *felt* too? Ay, and there was a time when I was what they call religious, and thought myself a pilgrim, like the one I read of in my mother's old book, with my face turned to the

bright city that I used to think of when I was looking after the sheep. And I was happier then, silly lad as I was, than I have ever been since. Shall I tell you why? My lady, I broke my mother's heart—I did! And how do you think I was punished when my turn came? My own son trampled upon mine!'

He stood upright before her now; his arms folded on his breast; his light blue eyes glaring with that wild flash, almost like insanity, which they wore when unusually excited. Then with a deep groan, as if he actually felt the foot treading out of his spirit its life and spring, he turned away into his own apartment, and resting his arms on the table, buried his face between them.

Lady Adelaide made no attempt to console him—she knew the depths of that agony too well. A sick dread, unknown till now, had suddenly made its way into her heart; and as she slowly mounted the little steep staircase, her whole soul went up in a silent but bitter entreaty—'Not that, not that, merciful Father! Is not my punishment heavy enough without? Spare me even the fear of such a one as that one—which I could not face and live!'

Walter had not accompanied her into the cottage. As she entered the garden, he had caught a distant glimpse of Abner and the pony on the moor, and lingered to watch them coming up. His mother always left to his own discretion whether to go in with her or not, and he was in the mood to think sick people and old men stupid and tiresome. As he was standing and wishing—as young folks will persist in doing, and so lose all the comfort of obedience—Stephen Ball, who was lounging idly, as usual, over his father's gate, began

to tease him with questions, as to how much ice he had pumped up lately, and if his mamma meant to bring him up as dry-nurse to all the gipsy children, and if he knew yet how many sticks went to a crow's nest, and other agreeable tokens of an inquiring mind. To all which Walter made very scornful answers, commenting on the ignorance of great lazy dunces, who knew nothing of natural philosophy or science, and therefore were not worth talking to.

'And how much may *you* know about it, master, since you're so clever?'

'I know a great deal more than you have any idea of. If you like to be civil, I will teach you something.'

'Much obliged to you, master, but I'm thinking I know as much as you.'

'You think so, you conceited noodle? What do you suppose we are going to the quarry for, presently?'

'No good, I'll be bound,' said Stephen.

'You needn't be impudent; there is no wit in that. I will tell you—we are going to look for specimens.'

'Mighty queer ones, too, judging from what you found last time.'

'Nonsense; I tell you these are geological specimens—but what can you know about geology? You never heard of the crust of the earth in your life, I dare say.'

'No, I can't say as ever I did. What's it for?'

'Well, never mind what it's for—that has nothing to do with it. There *is* a crust—remember that.'

'A precious gritty one, then.'

'And it is divided into formations.'

'What's that?'

'Don't be so stupid; formations are—are—don't you know? there is the primary—the second—'

'Oh, ah, I know all about it; I see now, and I know what it's meant for, if you don't.'

'What, pray?'

'To eat with the green cheese as the moon is made on—haw! haw! haw!'

Walter gave it up; there was no working on such thankless soil; Abner was now close at hand, and he had other things to think of. Certainly it did seem a curious thing, but whenever he or his mamma went out, they always *did* meet or see Abner somewhere, just as if he did it on purpose; it was quite odd. Alas! it was no use meeting him now, for the pleasure was forbidden.

'Mornin', Master Lyndon,' said Abner, as he came up. 'Jack is at your service, as lively as a kitten.'

'Thank you, Abner, very much—not to-day.'

'Fine day, sir; couldn't be better for the moors.'

Walter shook his head.

'He's too great a baby,' said Stephen, grinning. 'A go-cart is the thing for him, a dear—with his mammy a-shovin' of it behind.'

Walter's look might have reduced him to powder, but he still said nothing.

'My lady in there?' asked Abner, with a jerk of his head towards the cottage. 'Shall I ask leave?' added he, not being troubled with over-much diffidence, or any such inconvenient commodity.

'No, I promised I would not ask. Oh dear! how I wish I could go!'

'Pretty talking!' quoth Stephen, 'you know you would be chucked over his head.'

'I shouldn't: I rode him yesterday.'

'Look here, Master Lyndon,' said Abner; 'you didn't promise for nobody but yourself, did you?'

'No.'

'Then lay hold, youngster, for a minute.' And Abner threw the rein to Stephen, and marched straight into the cottage, as the door had been left ajar for the convenience of the visitors. He had to wait a little while till Lady Adelaide came down, and took up a strong position at the foot of the stairs, so that she could not pass till he had said what he had to say. She looked rather surprised, and not particularly pleased, on finding him there, hat in hand, requesting permission to give Master Lyndon a ride. Her little boy knew her wishes on the subject, and though she thanked him for the intended civility, he must allow her to be the best judge. And considering the matter settled, she attempted to descend the stairs, but Abner showed no symptoms of getting out of the way. Certainly her ladyship knew best, but it was a servant's business to obey orders, and his master's were, that if Master Lyndon wished to ride, he was to ride, and no mistake; and he (Abner) begging her ladyship's pardon, couldn't find it in his conscience to hinder the young gentleman's good feeling—no more than nothing could.

Unmoved by this last touch of pathos, Lady Adelaide answered coldly, that she was much obliged to his master for his politeness; and signed to him to let her pass—but in vain.

'At least, my lady, you will clear me to my master, for it will hit him uncommon hard, seeing as he only bought the pony to please the young gentleman—not but what he's well worth *any* gentleman's buying, or lady either, for that matter—would carry your ladyship like the wind, if you'd only be so condescending as to

try; and a proud and happy man would my master be, my lady, I'm sure.'

'Will you allow me to pass, sir?' said Lady Adelaide, offended at his pertinacity; 'your master shall hear how his orders have been obeyed, and I beg I may be exempt from this importunity in future. Do you hear me, sir?' she continued, so imperiously, that the gipsy was fain to succumb, and drew back with a bow, muttering to himself, that for a thoroughbred, he never saw one that he would like less to mount without a martingale.

'Where is Master Lyndon?' asked Lady Adelaide, as she passed him.

'Where is he? Waiting outside, like the dutifullest young lamb as ever—'

The words were yet on his lips when a shout, echoed by several voices, made them both start; and then came the outcry, 'It's off with him! stop him! stop him! help, help, some one!'

The next instant, Lady Adelaide, Abner, and Sergeant Wade were all outside the gate, without either of them knowing exactly how they got there. The pony was gone, and so was Walter. Stephen was racing off towards the moor, as if in pursuit; Mrs. Ball and her children, and one or two more, were staring and screaming after him, and Abner's hurried inquiries at first could obtain no answer. However, it soon came out that Stephen and Master Lyndon had been squabbling about the pony, and Stephen said Master Lyndon was afraid to get on, and Master Lyndon jumped on directly, and whose fault it was, nobody knew, but the pony set off full gallop; there was Master Lyndon's cap on the road; it took him all by surprise, like.

Abner waited for no more, but started off at the full speed of his long legs; Lady Adelaide made an effort to follow him, but her limbs refused to obey her will—a spasm shot through her heart that took away breath, voice, and power, and she sank down on a large log by Mrs. Ball's gate. The sergeant, dismayed at the ghastly expression of her features, hurried to support and comfort her. 'Long life to you, madam, keep up! You didn't use to want heart—don't fancy mischief till it comes.'

It was indeed unusual to see her so completely overcome by mere nervous terror; but cool and brave as she naturally was, and had shown herself to be, she was as prostrated now as if she had actually seen her boy hurled lifeless before her eyes; and could only sit pressing her hands to her heart, convulsively labouring for breath.

'Ye foolish body!' cried the sergeant, turning angrily to Mrs. Ball, as she stood open-mouthed with excitement, 'can ye do nothing better to help a mother in trouble than gaping at her like a unfledged pyet? Haven't you an ounce of sense along with all your gossip and rubbish?'

'You just be civil, and mind your own business; to be sure I can help her ladyship if she'll let me. I've got, by rare good luck, some of the good gentleman's wonderful stuff. I'll fetch it for her in a minute.'

Back came Mrs. Ball with a very dubious-looking tumbler, containing about two table-spoonfuls of what seemed to be water, none of the clearest; and this she pressed upon her ladyship with all the zeal of a proselyte. 'Mr. Randolph, bless him, had mixed it his own self, so it must do her good. He said it would

cure everything, from a chilblain to a broken leg—no, heart, I mean. Do just sip it, my lady; a spoonful is the dose.'

Without noticing the proffered elixir, Lady Adelaide, by a strong effort, regained her voice sufficiently to whisper hoarsely, 'Was it your boy's doing?'

'Lawk, my lady, I hope not. There aint no malice in our Stephen, only he is idle, and he and the young squire never do get on, somehow, and boys will be boys; and the lads about here do owe him a grudge, like, for laughing at them, and that; but to go for to do him a mischief—oh no, my lady! don't think it. It's a precious good hiding as his father will give him, if he has.'

'Or if he don't,' put in the sergeant, 'I know one who will.'

A cheering holloa in the distance, of 'All right!' stopped this last piece of consolation, and the angry word that was on Mrs. Ball's tongue. Lady Adelaide, restored to new life, stood up, her face all one glow of thankfulness, which was shared by all around her, as the pony was seen coming full trot, with Walter in the saddle, and Abner running by his side; Stephen keeping prudently in the rear. The relief of seeing him safe, for a moment banished the recollection of his disobedience; and it seemed rather to have escaped his own memory, for he jumped off, as soon as he reached his mother, patting the pony's neck exultingly, loudly declaring it was 'the best and most darling creature in the whole world,' and appealing to his friend Abner to bear witness that he had not even lost his stirrups, and actually stopped and turned him all by himself. 'I am sure you need never be afraid of trusting me again, mamma—never!'

'Ah, Walter,' she said, gravely and sadly, 'this morning I thought so too.'

He looked up in dismay. 'Oh, mamma!' he began; but without listening, she turned to thank the neighbours for their attention and sympathy, received Abner's apologies with courtesy, and then desired Walter to follow her home. He was doing so, his cheeks burning with mortification and shame, when Stephen, who ventured near as soon as my lady's back was turned, could not refrain from a polite remark that he 'would just about catch it for slipping mammy's apron-string.' Stung with rage, Walter turned, and flew at his enemy, who, however, kept him at arm's length; and the sergeant, promptly stepping between them, bade Stephen hold his saucy tongue, or he would know the reason why. 'And as for you, bairn,' he said to Walter, 'run after your mother—don't think twice about it—and never rest till you have her pardon. You have put a thorn into her heart to-day, that you will find in your dying pillow, if you live to be a hundred.'

Silently Walter followed his mother home; he did not venture to walk by her side, and she never looked round. He felt exceedingly miserable, more so than he had ever been in his life, and yet not penitent, exactly. It seemed hard that he might not ride, and to be jeered at by a rude lad as a coward; and then, instead of being praised for his courage, to be shamed before all those people! And with these thoughts, a spirit of rebellion began to swell in his bosom, and when they reached the Manorhouse, and they stood side by side, he was in the humour to resent everything that could be said or done. Rather to his discomfiture, she still

took no notice of him, but entered the house, and went to her own room, without speaking a word.

It was his first real disgrace, and he felt it keenly; but still with a sense of being wronged. If she had been by when Stephen mocked him, he was sure she would have been the first to encourage his mounting; if he could only explain how it was, she would see he was not to blame; and over and over again he planned all the good sound arguments by which she was to be convinced, but to no purpose. Except in that one cutting sentence, she made no allusion to what had passed; and what was worse, did not seem to see him, even when he came close to her, and looked wistfully in her face. He had no idea till then that he could ever be afraid of his own mamma; he began to see what it was kept people at a distance when she chose to do so; he could no more have jumped upon her lap when she looked as she did then, than he could have thrust his hand into the fire. To go humbly, and ask her pardon, though he knew he ought, was what he was not yet penitent enough for; so there was nothing for it but to get through the disagreeable, miserable, angry day as well as he could—and never had he known such. His grandpapa, after the post came in, was in one of his worst humours; nothing was right, and his own misdemeanours only made matters worse, for everybody proved to be in fault. Mr. Randolph was officious for offering the pony; the groom was impudent for pressing it; Walter was very naughty for accepting it; Adelaide was more to blame than any one for allowing it, and not making the boy mind what he was told; Aunt Penny was wrong for scolding him, as if a child was expected to know everything without being told; and Aunt Lucy

worse still for pitying him, as if young people were never to be corrected, or punished when they did what they ought not. There was no whist that evening, and very little conversation; Mr. Spindler came to tea, and his presence seemed to add to the Squire's irritation; they talked together in a low tone for some time, and the more they talked, the more worried Mr. Lyndon looked, and the crosser he became. Then Mr. Spindler, who of course had heard about the pony —did anything disagreeable ever happen that he did not hear of?—must needs go and sit close to Lady Adelaide, and talk to her about it; not in the least repelled by the manner in which she answered him, but asking her all sorts of inquisitive questions, and generously volunteering his opinion on all sorts of subjects, as if they had been the most intimate friends in the world. Well, the evening could not endure for ever, and Walter's bed-time came at last, and glad he was—until, on wishing all 'good night,' he discovered that his mother was not coming upstairs. He stood before her, reckless of Mr. Spindler's twinkling eyes that watched them both with so much curiosity; and gulping down the big sob that was ready to break out; but she went on working, and took no notice.

'Good night, mamma!' he faltered, at last. She raised her eyes slowly, looked full into his, and pointed to the door. He dashed out of the room, and upstairs in a minute—flung himself on his bed, and there gave way to such a passionate burst of crying, that he was heard all over the house.

He felt so miserable, he thought he must die: nobody ever could live like that. He had heard of broken hearts—suppose his broke now? His own,

own darling mamma not to speak to him, or kiss him —grief could go no further, and he buried his face in the pillow, and wondered what she would say if she found he was dead.

By and by there was a step near his door—and looking up, through his blinding tears, he saw his mother standing on the threshold. There was something so sorrowful in her countenance, that the remains of his pride and stubbornness gave way, and he started up with a passionate entreaty for forgiveness. It was all she was waiting for. She closed the door, seated herself on his bed, and folded him in her arms, while her tears dropped fast on his dark hair. He clung as if he had been separated from her for a year, repeating in broken accents how unhappy he had been, and that he really did not think he could have borne it much longer if she had not come soon. She gave a very heavy sigh, and pressed him closer to her bosom.

'Walter,' she said, in a low earnest voice, that thrilled him with strange excitement, 'I am going to place a confidence in you that I am sure you will not misuse. It may help you to understand why I looked so grave and cold. I was thankful to see you safe—I bless God for His mercy! but to see you had disobeyed me was a grief I hardly knew how to bear. Shall I tell you why? Walter, when I was young—older than you are, old enough to know my duty, and to do it—*I* too disobeyed—I rebelled against my mother's express commands, and in defiance of her wishes married your father. You know how dear his memory is, you have seen how sad my life has been since we lost him; but no one can tell how every sorrow has been embittered by that one bitter remembrance.

I saw your little sister die—I saw your father fall—I suffered anxiety and fatigue in saving you—I went through scenes that I could never describe to you—I have been sad enough and weary enough to feel, as you did just now, that I could not bear it much longer; but, Walter, there is nothing I have borne that is half so terrible as this unforgiven sin. You have felt it weary work to be without my love for a day; I have had it to bear for years, and am nearly hopeless now. No repentance—no entreaty—no tears—many and bitter as they have been, have turned her heart back to me again—and perhaps, never will.'

'Oh, mamma, mamma! how cruel of her! You kissed me directly I said I was sorry—why will she not believe you when you tell her you are?'

'I have never seen her since, Walter: I may never see her again. I am forbidden to write, or to visit her. No, do not call her cruel; you do not know all, nor half her goodness, her excellence—so good, so excellent, that disobedience was only the greatest sin!'

'As mine was to you,' murmured Walter, nestling closer to his mother, whom he never worshipped as at this moment. Presently he began to wonder whether, when he grew bigger, he should ever see his grandmamma, and if he did, whether he could tell her how sorry his mamma was, and how good and kind she was to *him* when he was disobedient. Something of this he expressed aloud, and though his mother could not share the sanguine hope that was fast rising into certainty, she kissed him for his sympathy, reminding him, in a serious tone, that he must first show himself worthy of the confidence she had reposed in him. It was now time for him to be in bed; so they would talk no more,

but join together in prayer, that they might both be forgiven, and both be enabled to amend. Walter, deeply impressed, and quite subdued, knelt down by her side immediately: and if ever prayers went up from humble and contrite hearts, they were those that night of both mother and son.

CHAPTER XVI.

Imogen. I am sorry, sir,
You put me to forget a lady's manner,
By being so verbal; and learn now, for all,
That I, which know my heart, do here pronounce,
By the very truth of it, I care not for you.

SHAKESPEARE.

BUT a new source of anxiety had been created for Lady Adelaide by this incident. There was no doubt of Walter's penitence or sincerity; but it had shaken her security in his childish submission, and she was compelled to face the truth, that he was growing too old and forward to be safely brought up at home. She could not always keep him by her side; he would mix with such society as he found most attractive, and whether he quarrelled with village boys, or made friends with a gipsy horse-dealer, in point of evil seemed to her pretty much the same. He thought too much of himself and his own gratification; it was time, she felt, that he was with his compeers, learning to be a man among men, even if, in some things, he learned less than she could teach him at home. It was heavy work to contemplate her daily life without his society, but if it was for his good, that she must try and bear. But when she had reached this point, another painful question arose. How was he to go to school? The income

she possessed, when her share of the household expenses was deducted, barely sufficed for their clothes, and fell far short of the necessary sum for such a school as she would wish to choose. Her father-in-law had often talked, and rather grandly, of Eton, or Harrow, or Westminster, as the only proper place for his heir's education; but whether he ever seriously contemplated such an expense, Adelaide doubted, as strongly as she was convinced he *would* assist to the best of his ability, provided it were done in his own way. It took her some time, and cost her a painful struggle to resolve on breaking the subject to him; but she was little prepared for the scene that ensued. Mr. Lyndon flew into one of his most violent fits of rage, declared they all wanted to ruin him, and he should be a beggar now before he died. School? Walter must learn business, and how to make money, as *he* had done; a fine gentleman's life had not answered with his father, and should not be tried on him. He thought Adelaide had more sense, more consideration, more gratitude. He had done all he could for her, and she never seemed satisfied, and he could do no more. If she wanted more done, she must apply to those better off than himself—with other speeches of a similar nature, which resulted in Penelope, who was present, coming up to where her sister-in-law was standing, and drawing her arm in hers. She did not mind skirmishing with Adelaide herself—rather the reverse—but she had no idea of seeing her so browbeaten by anybody else.

'I tell you what, my dear,' she said, as Mr. Lyndon turned on his heel, and left the room, 'I can no more stand all this than I can fly. He has nearly fretted me into fiddle-strings already the last week;

and now he has turned upon you, it is high time to look about us. There is something wrong somewhere, and if he will not tell me, I must find it out before it is too late, or we shall be in trouble before we know where we are. Don't look so downcast; you must not mind his being put out; you were in the right all the time, and he knew it, only it was the wrong moment to bring it forward; and if you had just been condescending enough to let me know what you were going to do, I could have told you how it would be, and have saved you all this worry, Adelaide, my dear.'

'Thank you,' said Lady Adelaide, frankly, 'and another time I will. I am grieved to have vexed him,' she added, after a short struggle; 'and that I did not consult you first; but as I have been a burden to you so long, you may imagine, Penelope, how very unwilling I felt to mention anything that seemed like encroaching further.'

'Now just say nothing about that, or we shall quarrel. Unwilling?—yes, I could see it was gall and wormwood to you, by your face, poor thing—and then to get snubbed after all! Well, never mind, it is neighbour's fare; you have often snubbed other people, so now you know what it is.'

Penelope's consolations were not of the gentlest sort; but somehow there was greater cordiality between the sisters-in-law at that time, than there had ever been before. Each had, almost unawares, given way a little; and each was surprised to find the other meeting her half way; while their mutual support became the more necessary, from the increasing depression of Mr. Lyndon's spirits—depression that always deepened into the darkest gloom after one of Mr. Spindler's attentive,

chatty visits. Miss Lyndon, as she said, took her own private measures, and the result appeared in a cheerful letter from her cousin Henry, offering to pay the Manorhouse a visit, and bring his wife and child to be introduced to the head of the family. This, happily, pleased the Squire; a friendly invitation was despatched, and his thoughts were somewhat diverted by the bustle of brisk preparation that commenced forthwith. Mr. Spindler, being good enough to call that evening, heard the news, and sent it round the village, *viâ* Miss Chatterley, the next day; and so put everybody into a fever of curiosity to see Mrs. Henry Lyndon, that would have mightily disconcerted that lady had she been aware of the fact. As for Mr. Lyndon, still out of humour with his daughter-in-law, he seized on the coming of his expected guest as a weapon offensive and defensive; and flourished Emma's virtues over Adelaide's head, as a model, and pattern, and reproach, till she dreaded the very sound of her name.

It was on the afternoon of the day they were expected, that as Lady Adelaide was taking her turn of sitting with her mother-in-law, she was surprised by the entrance of Mr. Spindler: surprised, because he hardly ever called on ladies at that hour, and it was evident this visit was to herself. However, as it must be borne, she prepared to bear it with resignation, and only hoped, by distant politeness, to tire him into a speedy departure. Quite indifferent as to the nature of his reception, he drew his chair as close to hers as she would let him, glanced with a significant nod at Mrs. Lyndon, who was quietly dozing by the fire, and expressed his great satisfaction at having found her at last 'as good as alone.' 'For you must know, my

lady, I have been dodging and waiting very often lately, to get a word with you, private and confidential, and never could hit upon the right moment. I have something *very* particular to tell your ladyship.'

Her ladyship did not look curious; but she said, 'Indeed?'

'Something to *say*, and something to *show*, I ought to have said first, my lady. Will you just be so good as to look at *this?*'

And taking out a large pocket-book, he drew forth and spread on the table a plan, which she at once perceived to be that of the Lyndon property.

'You see what this is, my lady?'

'I believe I do, Mr. Spindler.'

'You see where this estate formerly extended; a fine one it was, my lady, and all crumbled away, bit by bit, because it was in hands that didn't know the value of money when they had it. You see where I have drawn a line in red ink—that is all *mine* now; the blue lines are the bits in other people's hands, that I hope to pick up by and by; and the black is the Squire's—*as yet*. Now, what I want your ladyship to observe, is this—*who*, in the course of nature, supposing all this to be now in the family, would naturally inherit the whole?'

'My boy Walter, to my sorrow and his,' said Lady Adelaide, with a sigh.

'Sorrow? it would be a very pretty inheritance, my lady, I can tell you that! Oh, ah—I see, I beg pardon; I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. Of course we all know what an heir implies; and business must be done, you know, my lady, for we are all here to-day, and gone to-morrow—'

'May I beg of you, sir, to confine yourself then to the business, whatever it may be?'

'Certainly, certainly. Now, assuming your son to stand as the representative and lineal heir, does it not seem a thousand pities that it should be chopped up and divided in this way—one having the house, and another the land, a handful here, and a handful there, instead of the whole being united under one master with the family name—eh?'

Lady Adelaide did not deny it, but thought it was too late now to regret the misfortune.

'Too late to regret, but not too late to remedy it, my lady, begging your pardon. For my part, it would be a great satisfaction to me to think so fine a little gentleman as Walter should stand in his ancestors' shoes, as it were, and cut as good a figure as the best of 'em; it would, indeed, my lady.'

'You are very good, sir,' said Lady Adelaide.

'Well, but now, let us consider, my lady, if there is not some way of arranging it. It is only right you should know; you have observed, perhaps, that my good friend, Mr Lyndon, has been rather low lately? You have? Well, so I thought; and I believe I can explain how it is.'

Lady Adelaide interrupted him here by disclaiming all curiosity respecting Mr Lyndon's affairs. Whatever she ought to know, he would tell her himself when he thought proper.

'That is as may be, my lady. Perhaps there may be two ways of looking at that question. Perhaps *I* may know things that he does not; and at any rate may have good reasons for speaking, with which he has nothing to do. The long and the short of the

matter is this, Lady Adelaide—Mr. Lyndon owes me money.'

She was interested now, he could see, by the way her work dropped on her knee.

'Some time ago, you see, Lady Adelaide (I'm not going to bother you with business particulars, which no lady can be expected to understand, but merely just the heads, as it were), I advanced a good round sum to set up a young man in Australia, who was a friend of —of—ahem!' with a bow, 'the lamented captain's, I believe. Mr. Lyndon and another were the securities; there was no risk for me, the guarantee was excellent, and one must do a kind thing now and then; so I did it, and my interest came in regularly, and all seemed right, till lately; and now there has been some smashing among the houses of business, and the other security is gone to the dogs, and Hansell can't make ends meet out in the bush, and no one is left to pay but Mr. Lyndon, you see, my lady.'

'I see, sir, but too plainly. But how this is to make my son a large proprietor—'

'That is just what I am coming to. *I* know the good Squire's affairs better than he does. I know that a great lot of his money is locked up in investments that I wouldn't take at a gift. I know the house he is connected with is among the breakers (ha! ha! I didn't mean a pun), and it will take a little time, and a little money too, to make them weather the storm. I know all his resources, and to pay me if I claim my principal just now, there is but one thing he can do, without getting deeper into the scrape, and that is, to sell this place. A great pity, you think, my lady, and so do I. I don't want him to do that; but I will tell you what

I *do* want, and I think you will say it is a liberal offer. I will arrange so that his debt shall never trouble him in the least, if he will, on his part, settle the property upon *you*—'

'Sir!' said Lady Adelaide, about to rise from her chair.

He begged her to remain, as he had not yet come to the essential part of the business; and particularly entreated, in justice to everybody, that she would hear him without interruption. She waited accordingly, after a moment's hesitation; looking very stately, and anything but encouraging. He rubbed his hands, dived into his pockets, and not finding the sixpence, rubbed them again, gratis.

'I am a man, Lady Adelaide, as perhaps you are aware, who have made my own way in the world. With these two hands,' stretching them wide before her reluctant eyes, 'I have scraped together, more or less, we'll say, about—no, I won't come down to figures; I only just throw out a hint, that I *have* made a good thing of it altogether. Now I am getting older than I was (though mine is by ten per cent. a better life than Mr. Lyndon's), and I want to be comfortable and settled. I should like to make a little show for my money, and I have no objection to a good house in a fashionable part of London (one can always let there to advantage), or to a handsome carriage and livery, or an opera-box, or anything of that sort—provided I have a lady at the head of my household who understands what's what, and will give a stylish air to the whole thing. For such a lady, I would make any arrangement in the way of settlements that might be expected; and, in short, to come to the point without

more ado, my lady—I will settle the whole of the Lyndon property on you and Walter, after my death, if, as I said before, Mr. Lyndon will do the same by the house and grounds, and you will consent to make Abel Spindler the proudest and happiest of men.'

He bent forward on his chair, as if ready on the smallest encouragement to drop on his knee, and take her hand; he durst not touch it without. By a resolute effort of self-command she had preserved her composure; but she was obliged to remain silent a few moments even after he had stopped speaking, to make sure that her contempt and resentment would not get the better of her dignity. When she did speak, however, there was no mistake about her meaning. She forced herself to expressions of gratitude for intended liberality; but did not disguise her astonishment at Mr. Spindler's ever entertaining for a moment the possibility of such an offer being accepted. She could not accuse herself of having given him any encouragement.

'Did I ever say you had, my lady? Not I. I have not watched you all this while for nothing. I know every turn of your lip pretty well by this time, and I am not so foolish as to expect you to care about me for myself; we leave all that nonsense for young folks who know no better; I only make you a handsome offer, and no offence being meant, none need be taken that I can see. It is no secret what your marriage *here* cost you. Now don't fire up, my lady, before you hear me out! Anybody can see how you are left in the world, with nothing of your own, and your boy with no prospects whatever that I know of. Now, if you think better of what I have said, you will be able to snap your fingers at all your proud relations, and be

beholden to nobody; and when they see how well off you are without their help, may be they will come round all the sooner; for your grand folks know the difference, none better, between an imprudent marriage for love, and a sensible one for money. So take your time before you answer, my lady; I can wait.'

'I have answered you, sir; and with more patience than I could have believed possible. I would request you now not to try me any further.'

'Well, well, I won't give it up—I can't. You *must* see it is all handsome and liberal on my part. Think of all this property united again under Walter! And as for my name, I don't care about changing it, to please you. It can be Spindler-Lyndon or Lyndon-Spindler, or what you like; it will only cost a little money to the Heralds' College—'

The blood of all the Chesters was nearly boiling over.

'For the last time, sir, I must beg you to receive my answer. I am unwilling to admit the possibility of your presuming to insult me; but if you persist—'

'Presume! insult, indeed!' said he, waxing irate in turn, 'when I offer you thousands for nothing at all? Take care, my lady, how you put *me* up; I can be as high as anybody, if you come to that. You think us all beneath your notice, that I am quite aware of; but I can tell you, a lady who makes a runaway match, and is sneered at by her own belongings in consequence, has nothing so very much to plume herself on after all!'

'You *have* insulted me now, sir,' she said, rising, while her eyes flashed fire. 'Leave the room instantly, without another word!'

The look and gesture were irresistible; he rose to obey, muttering with rage. She followed him step by

step, as he moved slowly back out of the room, across the hall to the hall-door. There he stopped; she pointed menacingly to the door. He ground his teeth and clenched his hands.

'You may look as you like, my lady; you'll have to come down before you've done, I can tell you. High looks won't pay debts, and that Mr. Lyndon knows. Take my offer or the consequences; I give you forty-eight hours to decide!'

She disdained to answer, and signed to him to depart so significantly, he thought it best not to provoke her further. In another minute she was standing alone.

Was it fancy, or did she hear a deep breath drawn close behind her? She turned, and looked at Mr. Lyndon's half-open study door, and made a step towards it to see if any one was there; but all was still, and she had no time to indulge in nervous imagination. Mrs. Lyndon, roused by the slam Mr. Spindler gave in his exit, had just woke up with a start, and a querulous cry: and her daughter-in-law was engaged for some time in soothing and amusing her, till she gradually fell asleep once more, with Adelaide's hand in hers.

Unwilling to risk startling her again, Lady Adelaide remained perfectly quiet; and had now leisure to ponder on what had just occurred. The reaction that follows excited feeling left her depressed in spirits; and she could not shut her eyes to the fact, that she had made an enemy of a dangerous man. As far as she was herself concerned, she felt equal contempt for his suit and his enmity; the former, indeed, was almost too ludicrous to think about, and she was ashamed to recollect the anger to which she had allowed herself to be moved by his vulgar insolence. But if his

statement was true, Mr. Lyndon's worry of spirits was but too well accounted for, and she dreaded to think of the trouble hanging over his head. Was it a part of her punishment, that wherever she went, evil was to follow? If so, would it not be better for her, at any cost, to leave her present shelter, and in some neighbourhood where she was unknown, turn her abilities to account, to maintain herself and her son? She thought of this very seriously; if it was true that the Lyndons were in difficulties, they would be less likely to oppose such a measure—at any rate, it would only be right to relieve them as much as she could. For herself, she had only to pray for submission, and strength; that she might take up the burden allotted to her, and do her duty, whatever it might prove to be.

But what was there for her to do? She must consult Henry when he came: he knew the world better than anybody in Cannymoor, and would put her in the way of seeking a situation of some kind or other, whatever he thought her fit for. If she could but put Walter to school, she could live on very little herself, and she would work to the utmost of her strength, either as a governess, or a teacher, or a companion to an invalid—anything for a salary that would cover his expenses. The thought crossed her, as she thus resolved, how little she had valued the comparative rest of her present home; how its cares and vexations had overbalanced its advantages, and filled her with repining, instead of gratitude. Had she but borne in mind, that in the lot she had chosen for herself, her duties must henceforth be found—and that only in the cheerful acceptance of duty could she expect peace and comfort—the past years of her sojourn in Cannymoor would have left her

a very different retrospect. The good she might have done—the little every-day bitternesses she might have avoided—the opportunities lost—the pride and reserve indulged—came now like a cloud upon her conscience; as if a voice were repeating in her ears, 'These three years come I seeking fruit, and finding none. Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?'

Silently and unnoticed, the large tears gathered and dropped, as she sat with one hand still clasped in the sleeper's, and her head resting on the other. Could she have had her choice at that moment, it would, she felt, have been far easier to say, 'It is enough, now take away my life,' than to gird up the loins of her mind for hard and thankless labour—who could tell for how long? But she was learning to submit herself—to let Another decide for her, and to be ready, without repining, to turn back for a forty years' wandering in the wilderness, if only the pitying Presence would go before her, and bring her over Jordan when her work was done. Her natural bravery of character made this easier than it would have been for one of a more morbid temperament; and as she inwardly resolved, simply and sincerely, to do her best, she involuntarily lifted her head, as if to dare the worst.

A glass hung just before her, and the reflected rays of the afternoon sun fell on it as she looked up. She started, and no wonder; for brightened by that gleam just darting through the clouds, there was a face looking full upon hers—so tender, so pitying, so earnest, that but for the glowing passion of the eyes, it might have been that of a loving brother. It was a face she believed at that moment to be hundreds of miles off; and she involuntarily passed her hand before her own eyes to

make sure it was not an illusion. When she looked again, it was gone. Slowly and cautiously, so as not to disturb her charge, she turned round. No one was there; she fancied she saw the door move, but could not be sure. She listened, but heard nothing. It was very strange, and she could almost have believed she had been dreaming, only she was decidedly wide awake at the time, and the impression was too vivid to be fancy.

The time seemed long to Lady Adelaide, before any one came to relieve her from her post. The dinner hour had been put off on account of the visitors, and it was now past the time when they were expected to arrive. At last Mr. Lyndon came hastily in; rousing his wife by his entrance, but happily this time without causing her alarm.

'So Henry and Emma will not be here till nine; waited at Lilford on account of the baby—hang the baby! I wish people would learn to be punctual; keeping one in suspense in this way!' Then, before Adelaide could inquire how the information had come, 'What is this on the table, my dear? A map of the Lyndon property? Who brought it here?'

'Mr. Spindler, sir—I suppose he forgot it.'

'What did he come here for? To see *you?*'

'So it appeared, sir.' Lady Adelaide came up to the table, and stood close to him, laying her hand on his. Something in her manner struck him, and he turned sharply round to look into her face.

'Is it possible?'

Her cheeks were burning, and her eyes downcast. He clenched her hand tightly, crushing her slender fingers without remorse. 'Tell me, in one word, what

has he told you? I have a right to know all he said; and I expect it from you, Lady Adelaide, as you are a gentlewoman!'

'I have no wish but to tell you all, my dear father,' she said, with a mildness that disarmed his impetuosity, 'it is only right you should know. Mr. Spindler has made me an offer of marriage.'

Mr. Lyndon groaned, and set his teeth hard. 'That was not all, I *know*.'

'No, sir. He took the liberty, in spite of my remonstrances, of entering into your private affairs.'

'Very good of him—true friendship on his part. What had that to do with his exceedingly modest proposal?'

'I am ashamed even to mention it to you, sir.'

'I beg you will keep nothing back—I *will* know all.'

As reluctantly as if it was her own, and in as few words as she could, Lady Adelaide explained Mr. Spindler's liberal plan. She had not miscalculated its effect on Mr. Lyndon's irritable temper; his face grew purple with the boiling rage he durst not allow to explode.

'The little money-getting viper,' he said, half-choked with passion. 'I know how long he has been manœuvring for this—ungentlemanly scoundrel, after all the civility he has met with here! I have dreaded it longer than you suppose. And he knows well enough how I am circumstanced; he knows it would be ruinous for me to raise the money now; that I only want time, and we shall be all right. That house will go on again, and Hansell will do well by and by, and Spindler knows it; but he has his own ends to carry out, the rascal! But we must outwit him; it will only

cost us a few smooth words; anything to gain time. You were civil to him, I hope?'

'Indeed, sir, I was as civil as I could, until he used unwarrantable language, and then I desired him to leave the house.'

'And you actually let him go away in anger, knowing what his purpose was?'

'I could not help it, sir.'

'You could not help it! That is the way you have treated all the people here from the first, with your indifference and reserve! And now this man, who wants to rob me of the home that has given you shelter, and which it is my pride to improve for your boy, you send him away, provoked to do his worst, when it would have cost you nothing but a little self-control to make him patient, if not friendly. It is very hard, and I must say, very cruel!'

'Dear sir, what could I do? If you had heard—'

'Never mind what I might have heard. We know he is no gentleman, and we don't expect him to behave as one; we can only look upon him as a crafty enemy, and in war all stratagems are fair. Time—time, is all we want! It is not too late even now; I will see him myself: and if you have any regard or feeling for me, any love for your child, any tenderness for your husband's memory, Adelaide—'

'Oh heavens!' she murmured, covering her face with her hands.

'You will, you will,' persisted he eagerly, drawing her hands down again, and wringing them in his; 'you will overlook his vulgar rudeness, just for once; you will speak him fair; you *must*, Adelaide! I only ask it of you for a short time; after *that*, you may turn

your back upon him as soon as you please, and I shall be the first to say you are right: but just now, till I see how I am situated, and have pulled through the present difficulty, do the only thing you can to help me, and be civil to the rascal, for my sake, will you? I don't ask you to commit yourself—far from it; but a word or two, or a smile, if necessary, will cost you nothing, and will, at any rate, keep him in uncertainty. Say that you will do what I ask; it is not much, after all I have done!'

He waited for her answer; saw the refusal in the indignant light of her eye, turned deadly pale, and reeled to the door.

Adelaide heard a heavy fall outside—flew to the spot, and found him attempting to rise; as she approached, he motioned her fiercely to stand back—raised himself by a strong effort, made a sign not to alarm his wife, and staggered to a chair, wiping the cold moisture from his forehead. She passed her arm round him, whether he would or not; entreating him to be composed, and all might yet be well.

'Yes,' said he, 'it may indeed; for it will soon be over as far as I am concerned. It will kill me to give up this place—I know it—I feel it.' And he covered his face with a sob that went to his daughter-in-law's heart. She sank on her knees beside him, and clasped him in her arms. 'Father, dear father, I am in your hands; do with me as you will. You cannot wish me to sell myself to that man?'

'Heaven forbid!' he exclaimed, raising his head with revived hope. 'I would as soon set the house on fire with my own hands, as save it at such a cost.'

'Then what am I to do? Only tell me, and I will do it.'

'You promise?' cried he, almost wildly.

'Only be composed, dear sir, and I will promise anything.'

'You put yourself, you say, in my hands. You will do whatever I ask you? No reservation—no drawing back out of false pride, because you fancy yourself affronted? You promise?'

'Yes,' she said, soothingly, for his excitement made her dread to offer a word of opposition.

He revived at once. 'Thank you, thank you—you have saved my life. I felt as if I should have died just this minute—as if it was all over with me. Now I can breathe again, and nobody need know anything about it but ourselves; it would only vex your sisters. God bless you, Adelaide, my own dear daughter. Let them say what they will, you *are* a good daughter to me, and *that* I will maintain before everybody.'

It was her one drop of comfort, for which she thanked God as he left her.

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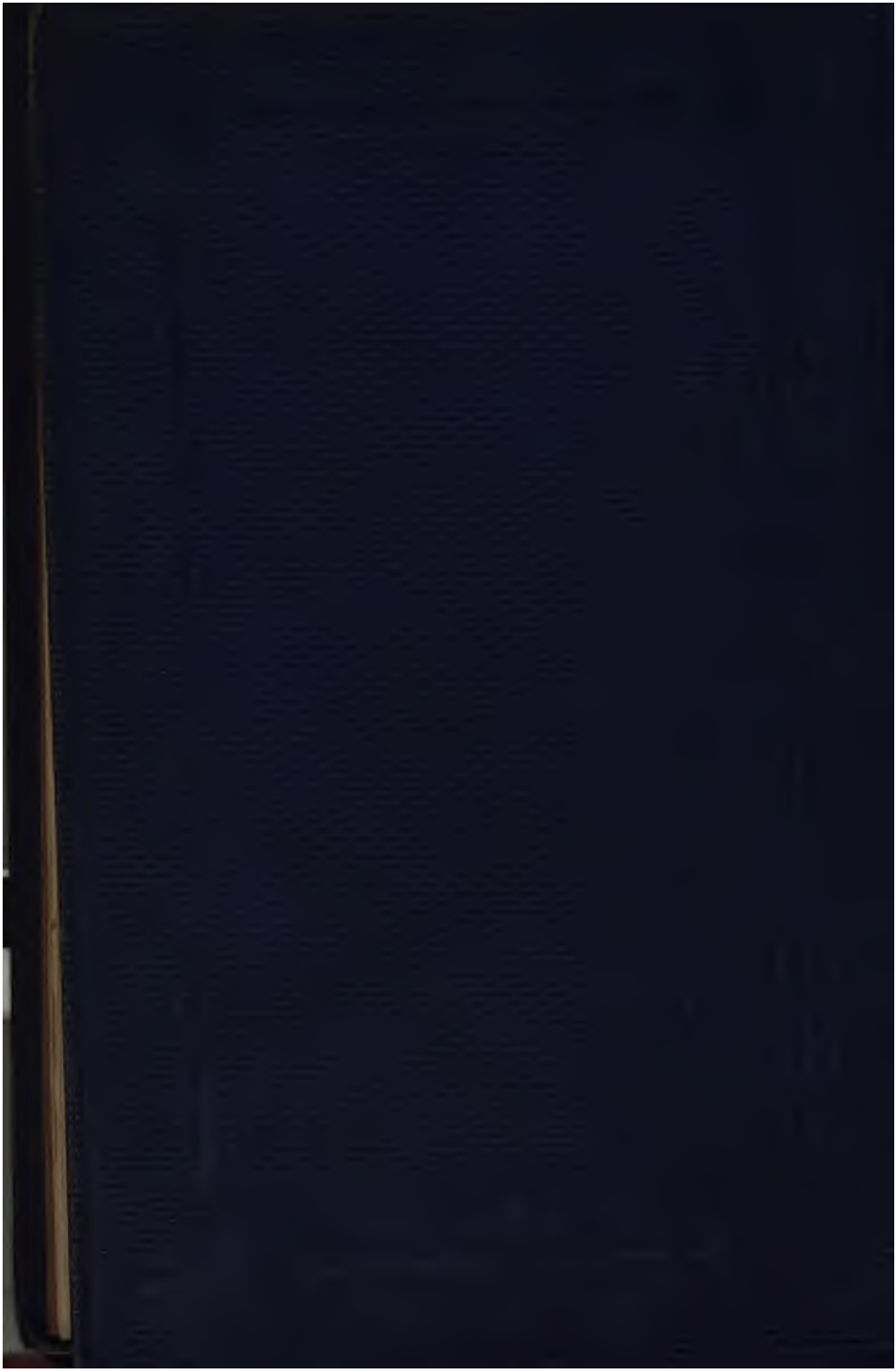
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